

# **The Positions of Berlin's Pluralism**

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## **The positions of Berlin's pluralism**

There are three possible positions for Berlin's pluralism. Firstly, it can be PUT – Pluralism as a Universal Theory. Secondly, it can be PPT- Pluralism as a Particular Theory and thirdly, it can be PMT – Pluralism as a Meta-Theory. We can analyse the real position of Berlin's pluralism from two separate pieces of writing: his Russian history and his moral philosophy. And these two pieces tend to indicate that pluralism is a universal theory or PUT. That is, in his Russian history, Berlin seems to rank three Russian thinkers – Herzen, Tolstoy and Turgenev – on top as being superior to all others and present them as pluralists. It can be inferred that he presents pluralism as normative or PUT through his analysis of the three thinkers. In Berlin's writing on moral philosophy, Berlin seems to connect his pluralism with traditional liberalism by the value of negative freedom. And if pluralism is part of liberalism, it can be inferred again that pluralism is a universal theory or PUT like liberalism.

However, the research in this thesis shows that pluralists are eclectic thinkers who draw for some ideas on the counter-enlightenment and other ideas on the enlightenment. Berlin does not present the three thinkers as pluralists. He just admires some of their counter-enlightenment ideas. So he does not present pluralism as a universal theory through the three thinkers. The eclectic character of pluralism also makes it clear that, in his moral philosophy, Berlin does not intend to make his pluralism part of liberalism, since liberalism is more of an enlightenment idea than the eclectic idea that is Berlin's pluralism.

While Berlin's pluralism as eclectic does not collapse into either side of liberalism, it is clear that the theory is independent from them. And the possibility that pluralism is a universal theory or PUT through the description of these three thinkers or through the connection with traditional liberalism is therefore false. As an independent theory, pluralism can be a universal theory (PUT) by itself but the indications in Berlin's writings especially in his moral philosophy lead to the conclusion that pluralism is not a universal theory (PUT) but a particular theory (PPT) and a meta-theory (PMT).

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### **Author's Declaration of Originality**

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication. This thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, my thesis does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights and that any ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other material from the work of other people included in my thesis, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices.

## Chapter 1 Monism, pluralism and the positions of Berlin's pluralism

### Part 1: Monism and Pluralism: the ideas

Before we can analyse the exact position of Berlin's pluralism, it is necessary to clarify its basic concept first especially its difference from monism – the theory that pluralism claims to be opposed to. A clear understanding of their differences will help us proceed to the next level of analysis. In the following section, the concept of monism will be presented first followed by the concept of pluralism.

#### Monism

The concept of monism which Berlin and other scholars have described seems to be an *extreme* one. But actually, there is also a *flexible* one as well.

#### Monism: the extreme version

From Berlin's writing, he seems to describe monism only as an extreme concept. It is the concept according to which there is only **one true answer** to all questions or there is only one final solution to all problems. With only one true answer, all other answers are certainly false. For extreme monists, it is not important whether we can reach this one true answer but we just need to believe that the answer does exist somewhere. Berlin explains:

A wider thesis (of monism) underlay this: namely, that to all true questions there must be **one true answer and one only**, all the other answers being false [...] If we do not know (the answer), our successors may know or perhaps wise men in antiquity knew, and if they did not, perhaps Adam in Paradise knew, or if he did not, the angels must know, and if even they do not know, God must know – the answers must be there.<sup>1</sup>

In the cases where many true answers exist, they are naturally compatible with one another and we can combine them into **a single group of compatible values**.

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<sup>1</sup> POI, 5-6.

There is naturally no conflict between the true answers. So the other answers that appear in conflict or incompatible with these true answers are naturally false and must all be rejected. Berlin says:

...the true answers, when found, must necessarily be compatible with one another and form a single whole, for one truth cannot be incompatible with another – that we know **a priori**.<sup>2</sup>

Crowder explains extreme monism in a political context:

The true moral system, once known, will enable us to **iron out all political conflicts** and make possible a perfected society in which there will be universal agreement on a single way of life.<sup>3</sup>

This extreme version of monism therefore consists of the **complete compatibility** of true answers.

### **Monism: the priority version**

Apart from the extreme one, there can be another version of monism which is a priority one. For the priority one, the true answers do not have to be compatible with one another. They can be incompatible. However, the compatible ones are naturally the core values and they are naturally superior to the incompatible ones. That is, priority monists divide true values into two levels: core values and other values. Core values are always compatible with one another and are always regarded as superior. The other values which are not grouped with core ones can be either incompatible with core values or incompatible with one another and are always regarded as inferior. This means **priority monism accepts that true values can be incompatible. But it ranks the compatible core ones as superior to the incompatible ones**. In this case they do not consider the incompatible values as false as in extreme monism. They believe them to be also true but true to a lesser extent than core ones.

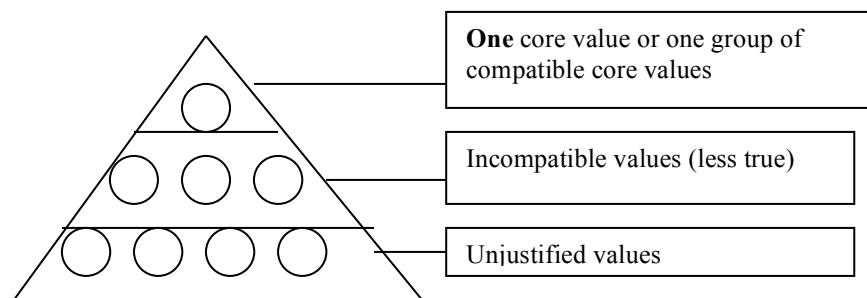
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<sup>2</sup> CTH, 6

<sup>3</sup> Crowder, 2004, 128.

For priority monists, if the incompatibility between true values does not create any problems, they will allow it to remain. But if there is any problem, they will always give priority to the core compatible values over the incompatible ones.

In other words, for priority monism, the compatible core values **always override** incompatible values. If we explain priority monism with a picture, it will be as follows:



This version of monism is referred to as ‘**priority monism**’ since it gives priority to the compatible core values. Jonathan Schaffer explains this by appealing to concrete objects as follows:

Priority monism targets concrete objects and counts by basic tokens. It holds that exactly one basic concrete object exists—there may be many other concrete objects, but these only exist derivatively. The priority monist will hold that the one basic concrete object is *the world* (the maximal concrete whole). She will allow that the world has proper parts, but hold that the whole is basic and the parts are derivative. In short, she will hold the classical monistic doctrine that the whole is prior to its parts. This doctrine *presupposes* that the many parts exist, for the whole to be prior to. Historically, priority monism may have been defended by Plato, Plotinus, Proclus, Spinoza, Hegel, Lotze, Royce, Bosanquet, and Bradley, *inter alia*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Schaffer, Jonathan, "Monism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/monism/>>.



Schaffer's explanation of priority monism is quite similar to the above explanation even though there is no mention of the incompatible parts in Schaffer's argument.

### **Monism's method of judgment**

From the above, it is clear that monism will have either only one true answer or one group of priority answers. This results from its method of judgment which is to exclude from consideration the contexts of values, such as situations, cultures or the relation between people and their values, such as their feelings towards values, their respect for or their commitment to the values. They take into account only the content or conceptions of values. Then they refer to **a single universal ranking** to compare them. As a result, there will always be only one value or one group of compatible values on top of the ranking. This means that monists can always achieve the one true answer by referring to the universal ranking. The other values which are incompatible with the top value will naturally be put below it according to a system of universal ranking.

In this method whereby monists exclude all contexts of values from consideration, they exclude the relation between people and values as well. In this case, the monists seem to require the people who judge values not to relate themselves to those values but to **detach** themselves from the values and to compare them impartially; that is by considering only the contents or conceptions of values.

The monist method of judgment might be similar to the judgment of two persons (or more) by the **IQ test**. That is, in order to find out the most intelligent person, they would need to exclude all contexts that they believe to be irrelevant to intelligence. They then take into account only the elements that they believe to be relevant to intelligence such as people's mathematic, language and logic ability. In this case, they would refer to the IQ test which they believe to be the universal standard to compare and judge intelligence. And there would always be one person who got the highest score from the test. That person would be judged as the most intelligent one.

By excluding irrelevant contexts, they would look only at people's ability to do the test without looking at their other abilities (which are unjustified by the test such as creative or artistic ability). The relation between the judges and the people is also not relevant. For example, even if one of the people has always been the judges' best student (with the best performance) and the judges have had a very good opinion of him, this would not be taken into account for the judgment at all. It is only their ability to do the test that the judges consider in arriving at the score.

By this method, monists would always be able to find the one true answer. The method, in summary, is to limit or exclude contexts, detach them from values and refer to a universal standard to compare them. This way, they will always be able to achieve the one true value or the ultimate value. By using a universal standard, it is impossible to justify two conflicting values as both ultimate at the same time. That is, it is impossible to have more than one ultimate value in monism. And it would not be right if the monists were to justify other lower ranking values (which might be judged as better by other non-standard rankings) to be equally ultimate to the ultimate one at the top of the ranking by the criteria of the monists.

### **Berlin's pluralism**

For Berlin, monism is a false theory since it can lead to a number of negative consequences especially violence. Berlin describes the negative effects of monism as follows:

Most revolutionaries believe, covertly or overtly, that in order to create the ideal world eggs must be broken, otherwise one cannot obtain the omelette. Eggs are certainly broken – never more violently or ubiquitously than in our times – but the omelette is far to seek, it recedes into an infinite distance. That is one of the corollaries of unbridled monism, as I call it – some call it fanaticism, but monism is at the root of every extremism.<sup>5</sup>

And,

If this [the monist one answer too all] is possible, then surely no price is too heavy to pay for it, no amount of oppression, cruelty, repression, coercion will be too high, if this and this alone is the price for ultimate salvation of all men? This conviction gives a wide license to inflict suffering on other men, provided it is done for pure, disinterested motives.<sup>6</sup>

However, what he means here is specifically the extreme monism which he defines elsewhere in his writings. Whether he is aware of the existence of priority monism and whether he disagrees with it in the same way as he disagrees with extreme monism cannot be determined at present given that Berlin never alludes to it.

By believing that extreme monism is false, he therefore proposes the theory of pluralism which appears to be in a total opposition to extreme monism.

The theory of pluralism that Berlin proposes has the key elements as follows:

### **The diversity of ultimate values**

In Berlin's pluralism, in contrast to monism which has only one ultimate value, there must be at least two ultimate values (or a greater diversity of them) belong to different contexts and being judged as ultimate in the different contexts. Berlin offers an illustration of this by presenting two poets as an example. He says that the Italian poet **Dante degli Alighieri** is the best poet in the Italian style, and that the Greek poet **Homer** is the best in the Greek style.<sup>7</sup> They are therefore the ultimate poets in different traditions of poetry. Ultimate values can be either the neutral values judged as ultimate in different contexts, such as the two concepts of liberty, or they can be cultural values judged as ultimate in different cultures, such as the humility of the Christians and the pride of the Republicans. The

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<sup>6</sup> CTH, 47

<sup>7</sup> CTH, 81.

following quotation can also serve as an indication of Berlin's view of the diversity of the ultimate values:

There are many *worlds*, some of which overlap. The world of the Greeks is not that of the Jews nor of eighteenth-century Germans or Italians; nor is the worlds of the rich the world of the poor, nor that of the happy the world of the unhappy; but all such values and ultimate ends are open to human pursuit.<sup>8</sup>

Having said that ultimate values belong to different contexts, this means that Berlin takes into account the contexts of values, in contrast to monism which excludes them. Berlin places importance on the notion of contexts. He believes that each value is good in some particular contexts, not in all contexts. For example, the value of honour has been praised only in some contexts while it has been considered inappropriate in some other contexts. Contexts can be **concrete**, such as **situations**. For example, whether we place high or low value on monetary gain would probably depend on the specific situation we are in. If we are desperately poor, we might find money more valuable than other values such as love and friendship. But if we are rich, we might find money less valuable than love and friendship. This means the value of money is relative to differing situations. Berlin clarifies this as follows:

What matter is to understand a particular situation in its full uniqueness, the particular men and events and dangers, the particular hopes and fears which are actively at work in a particular place at a particular time.<sup>9</sup>

The term situation refers to concrete contexts. But there can also be **abstract** types of context. Firstly, the abstract contexts can be **categories** – values can be judged differently in different categories. For example, the value of truth is judged differently within a religious framework and in an academic discipline. Secondly, the abstract contexts can be **attitudes** – values can be judged differently according to different attitudes. For example, if we have a positive attitude towards friendship, it contains a higher value. Thirdly, the abstract

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<sup>8</sup> CTH, 85

<sup>9</sup> Berlin's quote in Crowder, 2004, 140.

contexts can be **cultures** – values can be judged differently by different cultures. For example, pop music might be praised more in contemporary cultures than in the past while classical music is judged otherwise. Fourthly, the abstract contexts can be **paradigms** – values can be judged differently in different paradigms. The meaning of the paradigm in sciences, according to Kuhn, covers mainly the scientific theories and/or methodologies that they use for a given period of time. For example, Kuhn cites Aristotle's analysis of motion, Ptolemy's computations of planetary positions, Lavoisier's application of the balance, and Maxwell's mathematisation of the electromagnetic field as paradigms<sup>10</sup>. The paradigm, if applied to moral philosophy, can be concerned with the moral perspective and methodology that the moralists use to judge values in each theory. For example, we can cite the overall utility in utilitarianism and human rights in liberalism as paradigms. In this case, moral values tend to be judged differently according to each (moral) paradigm.

The ultimate values justified in different contexts (e.g. situations, categories, attitudes, cultures or paradigms) are often *incompatible* with one another in the sense that we **cannot place** them, by ignoring their different roles in the different contexts, into the same group or category. For example, we cannot reduce the two poets Dante and Homer into the same category of poet. Berlin says:

The idea that he [Machiavelli] planted in my mind was the realisation, which came as something of a shock, that not all the supreme values pursued by mankind now and in the past were necessarily compatible with one another.<sup>11</sup>

And,

...two incompatible outlooks; [...] which differed, not in all respects – for they were all human, but in some profound irreconcilable ways, [were] not combinable in any final synthesis.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Kuhn 1962/1970a, 23

<sup>11</sup> CTH, 8

<sup>12</sup> CTH, 10

While we cannot reduce them into the same group or category, we also **cannot have both** of them at the same time. Dworkin gives an example of life given over to spontaneity – ‘following the urges and impulses of the moment’ and life given over to prudence – ‘committing to forethought, particularly for the needs and interests of others’. He says

If you tried to bring these two values together in a single life the result would be a terrible  
mess.<sup>13</sup>

And Berlin argues the inability to have incompatible values at the same time by saying that:

Total liberty for wolves is death to the lambs.<sup>14</sup>

Not only are they incompatible and irreconcilable; in addition, they are often *incommensurable*, in the sense that there is **no universal criterion** (such as the universal reasoning or scale) that can be agreed by all cultures to compare and judge one value as being better than another. This is in contrast to monism which, as mentioned above, relies on a universal ranking to compare and judge values. Because of the lack of a universal criterion, Berlin claims, for example, that it is absurd to judge that **Dante** is better than **Homer** and vice versa since they are good in their different contexts.<sup>15</sup> Regarding incommensurability, Berlin explains:

These visions (of societies) differ with each successive social whole – each (society/culture) has its own gifts, values, modes of creation, incommensurable with one another: each must be understood in its own terms – understood, not necessarily evaluated<sup>16</sup>

And

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<sup>13</sup> Dworkin, LIB, 78

<sup>14</sup> CTH, 12

<sup>15</sup> CTH, 81.

<sup>16</sup> CTH, 9

[Machiavelli] merely points out that the two moralities are incompatible and he does not recognise any overarching criterion whereby we are enabled to decide the right life for men.<sup>17</sup>

The term incommensurability is frequently used in Berlin's writing. The concept seems to be one of the most important ones in pluralism. Because of this, there usually is **no priority or special status** given to any ultimate values in pluralism. This is also in contrast to monism which gives priority to ultimate values over other values.

Regarding the incommensurability of values, although Berlin claims that the values in pluralism are incommensurable, he does not define the conception so clearly. Many scholars interpret the term incommensurability in a strong sense as 'values are **completely** incomparable'. For example, when they say friendship and money are incommensurable, they seem to believe that friendship and money cannot be compared in any way. However, Ruth Chang<sup>18</sup> argues that the term 'incommensurability' should mean only that 'values cannot be precisely measured by **some common scale** of units of value' (such as in the utilitarian view). But it does not mean that values are completely incomparable. Values might be comparable in some other way which does not refer to the common scale of units. Chang claims that we should use the term 'incomparability' to mean 'values are completely incomparable' instead of the term 'incommensurability'. Therefore, according to Chang, if values are incommensurable, they are immeasurable according to a scale of units. But we might be able to compare them in other ways.

From Berlin's writings, it seems that he agrees with Chang's definition of incommensurability which refers to the inability to find some common scale of units with which to measure values in different contexts. An indication of this is that Berlin has never agreed with any aspect of the utilitarian view. Berlin says:

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<sup>17</sup> CTH, 8

<sup>18</sup> Chang, MCC, 1

There are no immutable, universal, eternal rules or criteria of judgment in terms of which  
different cultures and nations can be graded in some single order of excellence...<sup>19</sup>

Put this claim together with the above claim that Berlin does not believe we can all agree on any ‘universal criterion’ with which to compare values in the different contexts, and it leads to the conclusion that **Berlin excludes 1) the utilitarian common scale of units and 2) a universal ranking.** However, he does not define ‘incommensurability’ in a strong sense in which values are completely incomparable. He does not rule out all possibility of comparing values.

For Berlin, when values are incommensurable due to the lack of a common scale of units and universal criteria and they can be judged as ultimate only relatively in different contexts, Berlin seems to claim it is sufficient to say that they are **equally worthy of pursuit, or equally ultimate** in relation to one another. Values, such as the Christian’s humility and the Republican’s pride, when judged as ultimate in the different cultures, are, according to Berlin, equally worthy of pursuit (in their different ways). Berlin says:

We are urged to look upon life as affording a plurality of values, equally genuine, **equally ultimate**, above all equally objective; incapable, therefore, of being ordered in a timeless hierarchy, or judged in terms of some one absolute standard.<sup>20</sup>

But without a universal ranking, how can Berlin claim them to be equally worthy as one another? There seems to be **three different ways** to explain how it is possible for two ultimate values in different contexts to be ‘equally ultimate’. One is to say that the two values are **equally ultimate according to their own conceptions**. That is, the conceptions of values in themselves are equally ultimate to one another. For example, *negative liberty and positive liberty* are equally ultimate to one another according to their own conceptions. We cannot refer to any universal reasons to judge one as better than the other. The role of

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<sup>19</sup> CTH, 37

<sup>20</sup> CTH, 79



universal reasoning is limited in this case. Even if we are in the Original Position, as in Rawls' hypothetical situation (where almost all contexts and biased factors are excluded), we still cannot refer to any universal reasons to judge between them. Chang calls this 'equally ultimate' by their conceptions as 'parity'. She explains the definition of parity as:

The core idea of parity can be approached by focusing on the idea of an evaluative difference with respect to a covering value. Where there is some evaluative difference between items, that difference is 1) zero or non-zero and 2) biased or non-biased. A difference is zero if it does not have extent. A difference is biased if it favours one item and correspondingly, disfavours the other. A zero difference then must be unbiased. The traditional trichotomy of value relations can be explained in these terms. If a difference is non-zero and biased, one of items is better than the other. If it is biased in favor of x and against y, x is better than y. And if the difference is very great, then x is very much better than y. If, instead, a difference is zero and therefore unbiased, the items are equally good.

If we take the idea of evaluative differences as explanatory of value relations, the question naturally arises, why should we think nonzero, biased differences (better and worse than) and zero (unbiased) differences (equally good) are the only kind of differences there are? In particular, why should we rule out the possibility of *nonzero, unbiased* differences? <sup>21</sup>

The conception of parity is therefore concerned with the differences between two values when they are nonzero and unbiased or **when they are neither equally good nor better than the other**. Put simply, it is when two values contain different conceptions which are ultimate in different aspects from one another so they cannot be equally good or better than the other. But since they are both justified as ultimate, they are 'on a par' in Chang's term. Negative liberty and positive liberty can be an example of such 'on a par' values.

And because of their different conceptions which are ultimate in different aspects, a small improvement of quality in each value does not make one better than the other. Chang says:

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<sup>21</sup> Chang, IIPR, 26

If items are neither better nor worse than one another, and yet **a small improvement** in one does not make it better than the other, the items are on a par.<sup>22</sup>

Consider the two concepts of liberty: even if we increase a small amount of one, we still cannot make it better than the other. The same result would happen with the comparison between *freedom and equality*. Chang explains this ‘on-a-par’ conception in her article in a very clear and subtle manner and it seems that Berlin’s idea of ‘equally ultimate’ status between values is similar to her view. For example, Berlin says that the two concepts of liberty are incommensurable (on any common scale or universal ranking) but equally ultimate even in principle<sup>23</sup> – that is, without taking into account any contexts.

**Chang’s parity or Berlin’s equally worthy** is, in short, the alternative way to accept two ultimate values as equally worthy to one another merely according to their conceptions. It can be without referring to any common scale or universal ranking. We might consider ‘parity’ or ‘equally worthy’ as **a special type of ranking**; or the fourth ranking apart from better, equal (on the scale) and worse. Berlin seems to depend on it to justify the equal worthiness of incommensurable values.

Another way to explain how values in the different contexts or cultures can be equally ultimate is by saying that they are **equally ultimate by culture**. This is when values are judged relatively as ultimate in their cultures and we have some relation towards those cultures. For example, we probably have some deep respect or commitment to those cultures. So even though we might be able, in some ways, to compare them, we avoid doing so. Our respect or commitment to the cultures prevents us from comparing the values belonging to them. And, by avoiding comparing them on any ranking, we give them the status of being *equally ultimate* to one another. For example, it might be possible to compare the values of the Greeks with those of the Chinese if we were able to appeal to some universal reasoning (universal reasoning might be available in the O.P.), but we

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<sup>22</sup> Chang, IIPR, 26.

<sup>23</sup> FEL, 118

seem to avoid doing so since we respect the two cultures equally. Instead, we grant right away that they are equally ultimate. The same is true for the values of Muslims and Buddhists, and also for the other religious/cultural values that we often do not want to compare.

This case is concerned with the influence that cultures have on us. They have our respect or commitment so we feel that they are valuable. We then accord them special status which makes us unable to compare them. Lukes recognises this special status of cultural values and refers to them in terms of the 'sacred'. For Lukes, it is normal that we would avoid comparing the sacred things and grant them equally worthy right away. He says:

The values that the attitude of incommensurability protects are sacred values. 'Sacred things', wrote Durkheim, are 'those which...interdictions protect and isolate; profane things those to which these interdictions are applied and which must remain at a distance from the first. To be sacred is to be valued incommensurability.<sup>24</sup>

For the sacred values, even if we try to compare them, such as by referring to some universal reasoning, it would not in any way make us actually view one of them as better than another. This is probably similar to the comparison of two daughters. If we have to compare our daughters with whom we have a very close relationship, it would be very difficult, sometimes impossible, to accept one as better than the other. This is because we deeply love them both. They both have a special status for us. No matter what qualities each has more than the other – beauty, intelligence, personality, as some universal reasoning can rank them – it would not in any way make us actually view one of them as better than another. Or, even if one of them improves her qualities, she is still not better than the other for us. We would normally consider them both as on-a-par or equally worthy as one another. This is certainly different from how we view other people we do not know. Therefore, the special status that we grant to some values could justify the equal worthiness between them right away, without the need to refer to any universal ranking to compare them.

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<sup>24</sup> Lukes, IIPR, 188

The sense of the sacred, according to Lukes, does not cover only cultural or religious values but can be applied to neutral values such as political or ethical values as well. It means that any values can be sacred if they belong to the cultures that have some influence on the persons who live in the cultures. In other words, any values can become sacred if people in those cultures respect or commit to them. Lukes says:

It is not only believers, particularists, conservatives, romantics, and traditionalists who treat their favoured values as sacred; liberals do too.<sup>25</sup>

Chang seems agree with Lukes on the idea of the equal worthiness according to culture or the special status of values as well. That is, she has raised some examples of incommensurable values which seem to be sacred values as well. One of them is the comparison between friendship and money of which Chang says:

It might, for instance, be a constitutive obligation owed to one's friends that when confronted with a choice between a friendship and a sum of cash, one judges that they are incomparable.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, friendship is one of the sacred values which most of us usually respect or are committed to so that we do not want to compare them with other values especially money – the value that seems to contain a materially shallow attitude. We therefore often consider friendship as equally worthy to money while in fact they are probably not equal (in their conceptions), but we merely avoid comparing them.

Therefore, in pluralism, when we have some relation to values or cultures, the relation can be taken into account in the comparison of values. When we compare them, we often deny using any universal reasoning but refer instead to our respect or commitment to them and instantly consider them equally worthy

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Chang, IIPR, 20

as one another. In this case, the conceptions of values might not be taken into account. Our reasoning might also not be taken into account. Only our relation to the values (our commitment or respect) is the main element of the comparison.

This indicates another opposite element to monism. When the monists compare values, as mentioned earlier, they **detach** themselves from them (no respect or commitment is taken into account) and compare them impartially by appealing to a universal ranking. But, in this case, when pluralists compare values, they **attach** themselves to them (taking into account their respect and commitment) and compare them by appealing to their attachment to them.

It is likely, from Berlin's writings, that Berlin would agree with this judgment of 'equally ultimate by culture or by the special status of values' as well. However, according to Berlin's own explanation, he claims that values can be **equally ultimate as one another by mutual understanding**. That is, for Berlin, we all have the ability to 'enter into' the life of other people (by using imagination) and to thereby understand and feel empathy for them, no matter how different those lives are from our own. And when we can understand the life of another, we can also justify their values as being ultimate in the same way that they believe them to be. It follows from this that we can justify others' values as equally ultimate as our values. This process of understanding people (or the '**inside view**' in Berlin's term) makes it possible for values that derive from different cultures to become 'equally ultimate' as one another. This is possible without getting into any unbiased hypothetical situation. Berlin says:

...the way of life which, no matter how different from our own, normal men could find it natural to pursue, such ways of life as we, armed as we are, with *the capacity to perceive* the (objectively) good, beautiful and just, in all their guises and transformations, should not find it too strange to pursue in similar conditions, even if we do not ourselves accept them.<sup>27</sup>

From all the above, there are three different ways that ultimate values judged relatively in different contexts or cultures can be affirmed 'equally ultimate' (or

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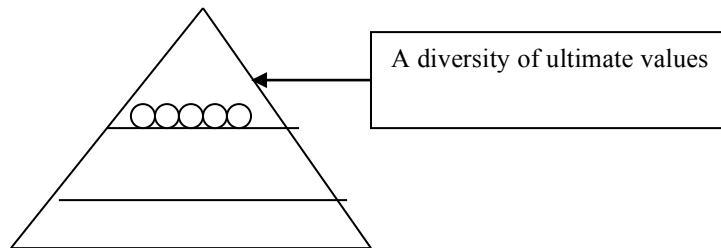
<sup>27</sup> CTH, 84

‘equally worthy’ or ‘on a par’) to one another, without the need to refer to any universal ranking. We can say that this makes incommensurable values comparable (as equally worthy as one another). And the way Berlin compares and approves the equal status between them can be one of the three ways mentioned above or probably all of them. The ‘equally worthy’ or ‘on a par’ can be seen as a special form of comparison which approves two contrary ideas at the same time. Firstly, it approves that ultimate values are relative to contexts (i.e. they are ultimate only in their contexts) while secondly it also approves that these values are equally ultimate as one another. With this special form of comparison that pluralists use to compare and justify incommensurable values, pluralists can achieve a cross-cultural judgment or agreement between people in the different cultures.

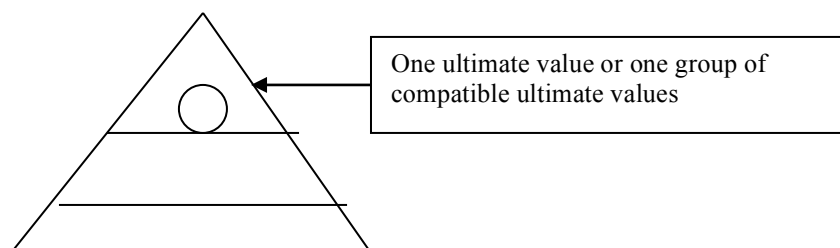
Overall, this means that Berlin approves the justification of ultimate values in different cultures. It is not necessary for ultimate values to be recognised by universal criteria. Only contextual or cultural criteria are deemed sufficient. As a result there are at least two (but potentially a diversity) of ultimate values, judged relatively in different contexts or cultures, but justified as equally ultimate as one another in pluralism.

So far, from the explanation of Berlin’s pluralism the main differences between pluralism and monism can be summarised here. In pluralism, Berlin takes into account the contexts of values such as situations, categories, attitudes, cultures and paradigms and these contexts make the ultimate values which belong to the different contexts incompatible with one another in the sense that we cannot reduce them to the same category nor can we have both of them at the same time. The contexts also make the values incommensurable with one another in the sense that it is hard for all cultures to agree on any common scales of units or any single universal ranking to compare and judge values in different contexts. This is because when values belong to different contexts or cultures, they are normally justified as ultimate by different rankings. However, Berlin says that those ultimate values justified in different contexts are equally worthy as one another. There are three different ways to justify their equal worthiness which are 1) to justify them by their conceptions, 2) to justify them by their cultures and 3) to

justify them by mutual understanding. After having justified them as equally worthy, there will be at least two ultimate values (but potentially a diversity of them) in pluralism. The picture of the top ranking of pluralism can be as follows:



In contrast to pluralism, as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, monism does not take into account the contexts of values at all (or monists might include a few contexts which they believe not to create bias in the judgment of values). Without contexts, the monists can easily agree on a universal ranking or universal reasoning to compare values impartially. This means that the values in monism are always commensurable or comparable. The comparison by a universal ranking always results in one ultimate value. But if there are more than one, they are usually compatible with one another. From all the above elements, there will always be only one value or one compatible group of values on top of the ranking in monism which is in contrast to pluralism. The picture can be:



The main difference between pluralism and monism, if reduced to one element, is the number of the ultimate values on the top of the ranking – **one in monism and many in pluralism**.

In this case, it is not possible for pluralism to have a harmonious society (or indeed one that might approach utopia) but a conflicting society. In contrast, the harmonious society or the utopia is the main objective in monism.

Here, as the distinction between pluralism and monism is clear, we can employ it in analysing pluralism and monism further in the following chapters. Thus far, we can say that the one and the many ultimate values are the indications that pluralism cannot in any way be combined with monism.

### **The Human Horizon**

In this case, although there can be a diversity of ultimate values in pluralism, it does not mean that Berlin accepts everything and adopts a relativist position. Values are limited in number. Berlin says:

The number of human values, if values which I can pursue while maintaining my human semblance, my human character, is finite – let us say 74, or perhaps 122, or 26 but finite, **whatever it may be**.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, from Berlin's quotation, he does not only describe values as equally 'ultimate', but equally '**objective**' as well. And this 'objective' status of values comes from the ***objective part*** in pluralism. That is, for Berlin, all justified values in pluralism, no matter how diverse and relative to contexts/cultures they are, must be within the scope of '**the human horizon**' (Berlin's term). This human horizon, in Berlin's view, seems to consist of two necessary conditions: the first one is the moral '**central core**'; the second is the **psychological condition**.

1) Berlin does not specify in detail the definition of the central core, and nor does he mention any values as core values. He just plainly claims that there is a 'central core' of moral conception which *all* human beings share, and contends that all justified values in pluralism must satisfy this conception. Berlin says:

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POI,12



All men have a basic sense of *good and evil*, no matter what cultures they belong to.<sup>29</sup>

And

There are, if not universal values, at any rate a minimum without which societies could scarcely survive.<sup>30</sup>

John Gray affirms that Berlin has some kind of ‘minimum morality’ in pluralism. Gray says:

[For Berlin, liberalism] is one form of life among many that may flourish within the common human horizon of the *minimal values that are universal*.<sup>31</sup>

We might be able to understand Berlin’s central core by investigating the values that he excludes. They are extremism, violence, killing and war. Berlin says:

To make such an omelette, there is surely no limit to the number of eggs that should be broken – that was the faith of Lenin, of Trotsky, of Mao, for all I know of Pol Pot. [...] Some armed prophets seek to save mankind, and some only their own race because of its superior attributes, but whichever the motive, *the millions slaughtered in wars or revolutions* – gas chambers, gulag, genocide, all the monstrosities for which our century will be remembered – are the price men must pay for the felicity of future generations.<sup>32</sup>

And

Few today would wish to defend *slavery or ritual murder or Nazi gas chambers or the torture of human beings* for the sake of pleasure or profit or even political good [...], or mindless killing.<sup>33</sup>

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29 CTH, 14  
30 CTH, 18  
31 Gray, *Berlin*, 1995, 163.  
32 CTH, 15-16  
33 CTH, 18

The quotations show that the values that belong to totalitarianism, despotism, Nazism, cannibalism or other violent groups and cultures do not satisfy the central core conception, and as a result they are not justified by Berlin's pluralism. In this case, the value that is most likely to be regarded as Berlin's central core can be put simply as '**non-violence**'. If this is true, then this would correspond to Crowder's own explanation of Berlin's central core.<sup>34</sup> For Crowder, the core should be concerned with the (basic) moral requirements or values that *all or most* people have accepted historically. Apart from the 'non-violent' element, there seem to be no other values even freedom or equality that *all or most* people have accepted (or would like to accept) historically.

2) Values in pluralism are not only required to satisfy the moral core conception, but must in addition fall *within* the scope of **human psychological conditions**, and thus not beyond them. The psychological conditions that restrict the values in pluralism seem to consist of '**imagination, understanding and empathy**', or the process that Berlin calls '**the inside view**'. That is, values in pluralism must be within the human ability to imagine, understand and feel empathy; in other words, they must be something that we can access and identify through this 'inside view'. Berlin explains the latter as follows:

Both thinkers [Vico and Herder] advocate the use of the historical imagination, which can enable us to 'descend to' or 'enter' or 'feel oneself into' the mentality of remote societies; thereby we understand them...<sup>35</sup>

In this case, values in pluralism will be justified only if people can imagine, understand and feel empathy for them. If people cannot do so, as the values are *beyond* their imagination, understanding and empathy, then these values will *not* be justified. In this case, values such as the cultural ones which appear to be illusions or to be too fantastical, such as those of the Nazis or the cannibals, would not be justified in pluralism.

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<sup>34</sup> Crowder, 2004, 133.

<sup>35</sup> CTH, 82

We are called upon to exercise our imaginative powers to the utmost; but **not to go beyond them**; not to accept as authentic values anything that we cannot understand, imaginatively ‘enter’<sup>36</sup> into.

Hardy explains them in terms of the **psychopath**:

The psychopath or ‘pin-picker’ is the figure Berlin often used to illustrate what he meant by attitude and/or behaviour that would fall outside the human horizon.<sup>37</sup>

Some scholars interpret the diversity of values in Berlin’s pluralism in the sense that there can be evils or bad values according to the fact that pluralism accepts a diversity of values which are incompatible with one another and there is no universal ranking or reasoning to judge them. For example, Gray says:

Berlin’s pluralist thesis of the incomparability of ultimate or fundamental values applies to evils as well as to goods.<sup>38</sup>

In this case, Berlin’s human horizon, which requires values to be within our imagination, understanding and empathy, rules out the possibility that pluralism would accept evil values, since the evil values such as Nazism and cannibalism can never be within our understanding nor can they receive our empathy. Therefore Berlin’s human horizon successfully rejects Gray’s argument.

By saying that the values must be within our ability to imagine, understand and feel empathy for, Berlin says we do not have to accept them as our values and/or be able to live with all of them. To ‘understand’ and to ‘accept’ (as our values) are two different conceptions and they must be separated from one another. Only the first is required in pluralism, not the latter. Berlin says:

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36 CTH, 84  
37 Hardy, OAM, 294.  
38 Gray, *Berlin*, 1995, 56.

As ways of life which, no matter how different from our own, normal man could find it natural to pursue [...] with the capacity to perceive the (objectively) good, beautiful and just [...] **even if we do not ourselves accept them.**<sup>39</sup>

And

...but to understand is **not to accept.**<sup>40</sup>

The two conditions of the human horizon – the central core and the psychological conditions – are **related to one another**, as Berlin claims that the first leads to the latter. He does not explain how this is so, but it is probably because the non-violent values are naturally what we can imagine, understand, and feel empathy, for whilst the violent ones (such as the cannibals' rituals) seem to be beyond the scope of our imagination and understanding. These two conditions help pluralists screen out unacceptable values such as the extreme, violent values, and make the doctrine distinct from relativism as Berlin says:

I believe relativism to be false on both grounds...<sup>41</sup>

Crowder however differs from the interpretation presented above, and reads Berlin's central core in a different way. He claims that it in fact pertains to general goals; in other words, it should be about the goals that all human beings share. According to Crowder, 'there are certain generic ends that are pursued by all human beings'.<sup>42</sup> From Crowder's perspective, Berlin's central core might be happiness, prosperity, justice and other goals which are, to the same extent, wide and general. These general goals will take differing forms in diverse cultural practices. However, it seems impossible that any of these goals, no matter how wide and general they are – even that of happiness – would be shared by *all or*

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39 CTH, 84

40 CTH, 86

41 Berlin's letter in Hardy's article 'Berlin's Universal Values – Core or Horizon?', OAM,

295

42 Crowder, OAM, 296

*most* people. For example, the goal of Buddhism is to be aware of human suffering, and to let go of the self or ego on the grounds that its retention is not consistent with happiness. And since Berlin's central core must consist of something that is shared by all or most people, Crowder's interpretation seems to be false. If it is the case, as argued above, that Berlin's central core consists merely of the non-violent requirement, then this would seem to be something that all or most normal, (i.e. not psychopathic) people could share.

Moreover, in Berlin's argument, he seems to use the central core to justify 'acceptable' values, rather than to justify people's 'goals'. For example, he asks us not to accept the values of the psychopath. The non-violent requirement can apparently be used to justify 'acceptable' values, and not people's 'goals'. Therefore, Berlin's central core should be closer to the interpretation that I presented above than it is to Crowder's.

Taking the two conditions (or the human horizon) into account, the diversity of ultimate values which are contextually or culturally relative must, as mentioned earlier, *satisfy* the central core of non violence, and must be *within* the scope of the psychological conditions of understanding and empathy. Put simply, those contextually and culturally relative values must satisfy the conditions of Berlin's *objective* human horizon. This is why Berlin says they are all '**objective**'.

### **The inconsistency in pluralism is solved**

The human horizon which is used to justify the values in pluralism as objective values can solve the inconsistency in pluralism. The inconsistency raised by some scholars is: how can ultimate values be relative to their contexts or cultures but at the same time all be objective? Berlin himself seems to put it in an inconsistent way. He says:

Any of which (ultimate values) may find itself subject to conflicting claims of uncombinable, yet equally ultimate and **objective** ends.<sup>43</sup>

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CTH, 80

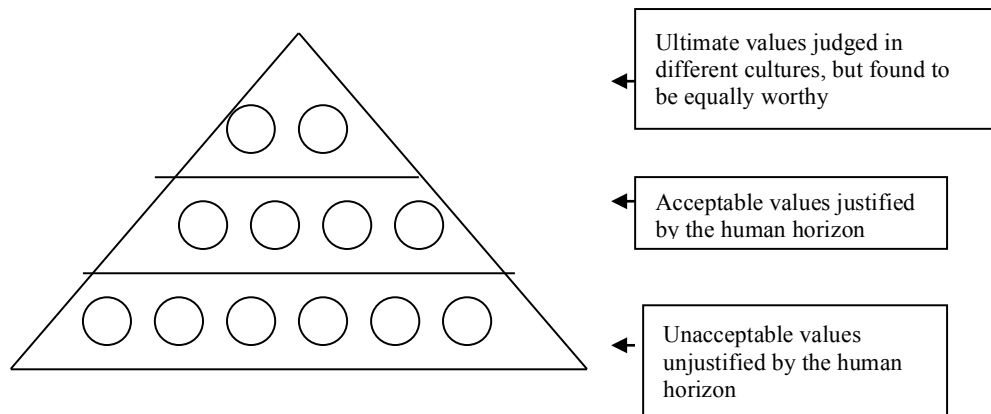
Crowder says:

It [Berlin's diversity of ultimate values] amounts to cultural relativism, and so conflicts with his commitment to [...] his notion of moral universals...<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, the answer is that, although these ultimate values are relative to their contexts, they can all be objective by the justification of the (objective) human horizon. The human horizon in this case acts as the universal criterion to justify the relative values as objective.

In the above explanation, when Berlin says that values are incommensurable or there is no universal ranking to judge between them, and he considers them all equally worthy as one another, he means only the ultimate values (on the top ranking). But, overall, there can be some rankings in pluralism.

That is, if Berlin refers to the universal criterion (or the human horizon), there can be some **rankings** of values in pluralism. Firstly, the human horizon divides values into two levels: '**acceptable values**' (the ones which satisfy moral and psychological conditions), and '**unacceptable values**' (the ones which do not satisfy them). Among the acceptable ones, some, if not all, are judged independently or relatively as '**ultimate**' in different cultures (since there is no universal criterion at this stage, and Berlin's human horizon is apparently insufficient to judge any values as ultimate). All of them, Berlin claims, are equally worthy to one another. These ultimate values can be separated into another ranking which is the ranking of ultimate values, living beyond acceptable values.



Consider the top ranking, the pluralist values that are ultimate in their different contexts and cultures but found to be equally worthy to one another and which are justified by the universal criterion of the human horizon are, for example, humility vs pride, friendship vs money, liberty vs equality, Berlin's two conceptions of liberty and all the non-violent cultural/religious values.

From this ranking, we can see clearly **the framework of pluralism**. That is pluralism must have **at least two or a diversity of ultimate values** which are contextually or culturally relative and found to be incompatible and incommensurable with one another. But they are equally worthy. And they *satisfy* the central core of non violence, and remain *within* the scope of the psychological conditions of understanding and empathy. The framework of pluralism therefore has two important elements. The first is concerned with the equally ultimate values at the top ranking and the second is concerned with justification by the objective human horizon.

### **Compromise and sacrifice**

Apart from all the above elements of pluralism, there is another element that is also important in pluralism. It is the **compromise and sacrifice between ultimate values**. Consider that there are at least two ultimate values in pluralism, usually conflicting with one another. It is necessary for pluralists to compromise between them. The compromise can be by **moderating the conception** of each ultimate value, so that they are able to exist together. Dworkin, for example,

claims that if we were to moderate the definitions of liberty, equality and democracy such as by restricting/reducing the scope of their conceptions, then we could resolve any incompatibility between them and locate them in parallel with one another. As he puts it:

We might say: liberty is not the freedom to do whatever you might want to do; it is freedom to do whatever you like so long as you respect the moral rights, properly understood, of others. [...] In any case, it is far from obvious that liberty understood in this different way would produce an inevitable conflict with equality.<sup>45</sup>

And

If a conflict between liberty and equality is inevitable [it is because Berlin] depends on that [extreme] account of liberty, then you will have that reason for rejecting that view [that they are conflicting]...<sup>46</sup>

However, if in some cases we cannot compromise and/or modify such conceptions – as would perhaps be the case with religious or sacred values, which require the adherents of this religion to preserve the conceptions as they are. This is why Bernard Williams does not agree with Dworkin. Williams claims that some people might be deeply committed to the original conceptions. To modify their conceptions would be to create **a sense of loss** for them. Williams says:

(After changing the conception of liberty in order to make it compatible with justice) the conception of liberty, liberty as they conceive it, has been violated in virtue of a certain conception of justice which they do not share. (It is a sense of loss.)<sup>47</sup>

In this case, Berlin suggests that we should **choose by referring to the situation** at hand, and without appealing to universal reasoning (since it is absent at this stage). For example, if we need to choose between two ultimate values to which

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45 Dworkin, LIB, 84

46 Dworkin, LIB, 89

47 Williams, LIB, 99



we are committed, say, between friendship and money, we cannot refer to any process of reasoning to choose them. Universal reasoning does not help us here. Neither can be better or worse since they both have our commitment. The only method we can use here is to choose them according to the situations and/or contexts we are in. Berlin says:

The concrete situation is almost everything.<sup>48</sup>

If the ultimate values are cultural values, Berlin tends to believe that people refer to their **cultural identities** to choose between ultimate values. Berlin explains how important cultural identities are:

A German cannot be made happy by efforts to turn him into a second-rate Frenchman. [...] Men can develop their full powers only by continuing to live where they and their ancestors were born...<sup>49</sup>

Choosing by situation or by cultural identity, as we do not appeal to universal reasoning, we appeal instead to **contextual or cultural reasoning** in order to consider the best choice in each situation. It is therefore misleading to say that we do not appeal to any reasoning at all in choosing between ultimate values. According to Lukes:

...careful, discriminating thought is needed to determine what values are at stake in any given situation of choice, especially if one or more of the values is sacred.<sup>50</sup>

As Berlin encourages us to choose between conflicting values, it is also alright if we promote one value over the other, since values are promoted here for the sake of resolving conflicts, and not with a view towards approving one value as being intrinsically better than the other. Garrard says:

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48 CTH, 15

49 CTH, 39

50 Lukes, IIPR, 189

There is nothing illogical for Berlin about a pluralist promoting one good over others, provided it is not done on the grounds that the chosen good is intrinsically preferable to the goods not chosen.<sup>51</sup>

Consider Berlin's claims that the ultimate values are 'equally ultimate' or '**equally objective**' as one another as explained above, so that to choose and promote one value always results in **the sacrifice and/or the loss** of another equally worthy one. Berlin says:

Some among the great goods cannot live together. That is a conceptual truth. We are doomed to choose and every choice may entail an irreparable loss.<sup>52</sup>

In this case, if the values in pluralism are not 'objective', when pluralists choose or promote one over the other it would not generate a loss of the other. It would be only **a trade-off** between conflicting choices. But Berlin stresses the 'objective' status of values in pluralism (as justified by the human horizon), which means that there is as a result always a loss in pluralism.

The trade-off is used by the monists. It is when we make a choice by referring to values' universal ranking. And the values judged by universal ranking as less worthy would always be traded off for the more worthy ones. This trading off of the less worthy value does not generate a sense of loss.

It is similar to when we buy products. When their values are unequal, we always choose the better one. For the one we do not choose, it is a trade-off rather than sacrifice. We drop it for something better. And we do not feel any regret. Lukes says:

(Trade-off) is an economic, more specifically a commercial, metaphor. [...] Trade-off suggests that we compute the value of the alternative goods on whatever scale is at hand, whether cardinal or ordinal, precise or rough and ready.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Garrard, OAM, 156

<sup>52</sup> CTH, 13

The element of sacrifice or loss set out above is also another important idea in pluralism. It is presented here in order to show its contrast to the trading-off idea of the monists. So far, the general ideas and the framework of pluralism are clearly presented. **In summary**, pluralism consists of 1) the diversity of ultimate values justified in different contexts or cultures and incompatible and incommensurable with one another. 2) They are however equally worthy or equally objective as one another. 3) They are within the scope of the objective human horizon. And 4) since they are equally worthy but conflicting, we must always compromise between them or sacrifice one of them and this will always generate the sense of loss.

The elements of pluralism are clearly in contrast to those of monism which consist of 1) only one ultimate value or one group of compatible ultimate values. 2) They are comparable on a universal scale or ranking. And 3) to choose one over the other is considered as a trading off rather than a sacrifice, which does not generate any sense of loss.

## **Part 2 The positions of Berlin's pluralism: PUT, PMT or PPT**

### **Can pluralism be monism?**

From the above elements of pluralism, especially the diversity of ultimate values, pluralism cannot collapse into monism. However, it can still collapse into monism in other conditions; that is, if pluralism determines its position as **the only universal theory**, or, if pluralism acts as if it were **superior to all other theories** in all contexts. In either case, pluralism would immediately collapse into monism. It seems that many scholars especially Berlin's followers such as George Crowder and Henry Hardy believe this to be Berlin's position. For example, Crowder says:

Berlin's liberal convictions (note: Crowder believes that pluralism is liberalism) are fundamentally universalist rather than 'agonist' or only locally valid.<sup>54</sup>

Or, they do not explicitly say so but they seem to describe pluralism as being superior to all other theories. To stress the point, pluralism can collapse into monism in two different conditions:

1) If it is **PUT** – PUT stands for 'Pluralism as the only Universal Theory'. This is the attitude that pluralism is **the only true theory** while other theories are considered false.

The character of PUT is that it has **values as its subjects**; PUT manages moral values under the pluralist framework. For example, PUT manages a plurality of values as equally worthy as one another within the scope of the human horizon. However, it does not deal with other theories since it sees other theories as false.

2) If it is **PMT** – Another condition that makes pluralism collapse into monism is if it is PMT. PMT stands for 'Pluralism as a Meta-Theory'. PMT is the attitude of having pluralism as a normative meta-theory or a **superior theory** to all other theories. It accepts that some other theories (in a limited number) are also true but they should be **managed** under the pluralist framework.

The character of PMT is that it has **theories as its subjects**. PMT manages (moral) theories under the pluralist framework. For example, PMT manages a plurality of theories as equally worthy to one another within the scope of the human horizon.

From the above, pluralism will collapse into monism if it is either PUT or PMT. On the other hand, pluralism will not collapse into monism if it is PPT.

3) **PPT** – The condition that prevents pluralism from collapsing into monism is if it is PPT. PPT stands for 'Pluralism as Particular Theory'. This is the attitude that

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Crowder, 2004, 172

pluralism is a particular theory being **equal in its dignity or worthiness** to some other theories. And as a particular theory, pluralism will be **chosen** only in some particular contexts rather than being chosen in all contexts. As a result, it can be sacrificed for other theories in some particular contexts as well.

The character of PPT is that it has values as its subjects; PPT manages its values under the pluralist framework in the same way as PUT. But the difference is that PPT determines its position as equal (in dignity and/or worthiness) to some other theories, not as the only true theory.

It should be noted that the term ‘theory’ in all the above cases means merely ‘**the attitude**’ towards political and ethical values and theories, rather than meaning the theory in full practical form which includes the implication of the institutions as well.

So, there are three possible positions of pluralism 1) pluralism as universal theory or PUT –considered as monism at theory level. 2) Pluralism as meta-theory or PMT –considered as monism at meta-theory level. And 3) pluralism as particular theory or PPT – considered as pluralism at the level of theory. It is clear that the first two positions will make pluralism collapse into monism while the last position will prevent it from the collapse. We will have to investigate further to discern if Berlin’s pluralism can be defined as any of the three.

### **The conditions for PUT and PMT**

Put simply, the conditions for judging pluralism as PUT, PMT or PPT are as follows:

The conditions for PUT and PMT

- 1) PUT – it is the only true theory. Its subject is values.
- 2) PMT – it is the supreme theory. Its subject is other theories.

3) PUT and PMT – they will be applied to all contexts.

The conditions for PPT

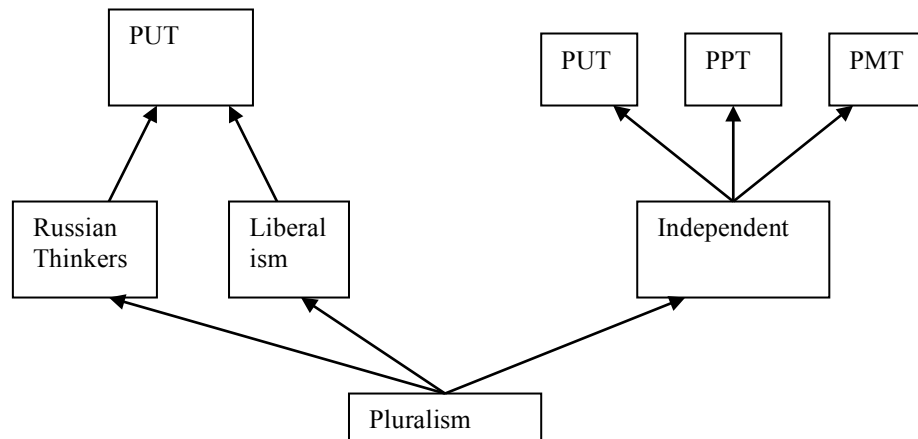
1) It has equal dignity to other theories.

2) It will be applied to some particular contexts.

### **Analysing the position of pluralism from Berlin's two pieces of writings**

To know the exact position of Berlin's pluralism, we need to look at Berlin's writings. However, there are **two different types of writings** which contain different subjects from one another. **One is Russian history** in which Berlin describes the important incidents happened in Russia and the ideas of some of the Russian intelligentsia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. **The other is his writings on moral and political philosophy** in which he describes his ideas of pluralism. In the contents of the two, the first seems to agree with and/or praise Russian intelligentsia (later found to be the counter-enlightenment liberals) and the latter seems to agree with and/or praise traditional liberalism (especially the value of freedom). Scholars therefore believe that Berlin might combine his theory with either of them: Russian thinkers (or the counter-enlightenment liberalism) or traditional liberalism.

There are two possibilities. **On the one hand**, if pluralism is part of either one, it means that pluralism tends to be a normative theory (**PUT**). This is because, in his Russian history, he puts three Russian thinkers on the top ranking so it looks like he wants to present their ideas (or the counter-enlightenment liberal ideas) as the norm. And in his moral philosophy, if his pluralism is combined with traditional liberalism, pluralism would be a normative theory since traditional liberalism is considered as a normative theory. **On the other hand**, if pluralism is independent from both, there are equal possibilities that it is a normative theory (**PUT**) or a particular theory (**PPT**) or a meta-theory (**PMT**) or obtains more than one position. We might be able to find indications or arguments from the elements of pluralism to prove these positions.



**The assumption of this thesis** as to the status of Berlin’s pluralism is that pluralism is *independent* from both – the Russian thinkers (or the counter-enlightenment liberalism) and traditional liberalism – and it is *not* a universal theory (PUT) but a particular theory (PPT) and a meta-theory (PMT).

### **Two steps to prove the assumption**

1) Firstly, we need to ask if pluralism is **independent** from the two theories of liberalism (traditional liberalism and counter-enlightenment liberalism). If it is not independent, then it is a combination of either of them. And to combine them as one theory, pluralism tends to be a normative theory (PUT). The assumption will be false. But if it is independent, there is a chance that the assumption of this thesis is true.

2) Secondly, if pluralism is independent from the two theories of liberalism (traditional liberalism and counter-enlightenment liberalism), we need to ask further whether the **indications or arguments** in Berlin’s writings support its status as a universal theory (PUT) or a particular theory (PPT) or a meta-theory (PMT). If there are sufficient indications or arguments to reject the PUT position and support the other two positions – PPT and PMT, then the assumption is true.

Put simply, first we need to know whether pluralism is an independent theory. If it is, there is a chance that it is PPT and PMT as assumed.

### **The first step**

As mentioned, the first step is to observe if, for Berlin, pluralism is independent from the two theories. This is by looking at Berlin's two pieces of writings. Now, let's have a look roughly at his writings on Russian history.

### **Berlin's Russian history**

In his writings, Berlin describes the situation in Russia during the 1840s onward in terms of a diversity of ideas conflicting with one another and spreading around the country.<sup>55</sup>

While he claims ideas are in conflict in Russia at that time, his narrative seems to suggest that they are comparable and should be ranked at different levels. **First**, he seems to put the Russian Empire of Tsar Nicolas I at the lowest level as he claims that the Tsar's government did many harmful things to the people including the impact of widespread corruption and the rejection of all freedom of speech.

**Second**, he seems to put the two opposed sets of extremists consisting of the left and the right on a higher level than the Tsar while both seem to exist on the same level as one another. In this case, he seems to believe that the two groups constituted a progression in Russia aimed at changing the country for the better. Yet they are both limited as a result of the extremity of their beliefs and actions inevitably resulting in violence.

**Third**, he seems to situate the other group of intellectuals, those who were moderate in their ideas and/or whose ideas seem to be closer to pluralism, at the

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All references to Berlin's Russian historical writing are taken from RT - *Russian Thinkers* (2008) and POI - *The Power of Ideas* (2000).



highest level of all. Most notable among these intellectuals are three in particular – **Alexander Herzen, Tolstoy and Turgenev** whose ideas, according to many readers, have much in common with pluralism. These three intellects are Berlin's heroes in his narrative of Russian history; he refers to them as 'three moral preachers of genius'.<sup>56</sup>

If we put Berlin's historical narrative **onto a chart**, it would be as follows:

[1 The top end] *the three thinkers – Herzen, Tolstoy and Turgenev*

[2 The middle rank] *the left – [equal to] – the right*

[3 The lowest rank] *the Russian empire, Tsar Nicolas I*

Although the ideas of the heroes (at the top level) are closer to pluralism, the way Berlin explains them does not convey that their ideas are particular or contextual or equal to other groups but ultimate on the ranking and/or normative (PUT).

From the above, the first piece of Berlin's writing on Russian history seems to present the three Russian thinkers as heroes. Readers understand from their heroic position and some of their elements overlapping with pluralism that the three thinkers are, for Berlin, pluralists. So if Berlin actually presents them as pluralists and puts them on top of the ranking, it means that he intends to present pluralism as normative (or PUT).

The analysis of whether or not the three thinkers are actually pluralists (for Berlin) will be in **chapter 2 and 3**. It will be done by taking the ideas of pluralism presented above to compare with the ideas of the three thinkers in Berlin's writings. The analysis however turns out to be that the three thinkers are more akin to **the counter-enlightenment liberals** whose main ideas and elements are different from pluralism. The two theories – pluralism and counter-enlightenment liberalism – are therefore independent from one another. When they are independent from one another, it is proved that Berlin does not use his

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Kelly, RT, 29.

Russian history to present pluralism as the norm or PUT. But he seems merely to present his admiration for the three thinkers (and/or the counter-enlightenment thinkers).

This first proof of pluralism as **independent** from the ideas of the Russian thinkers or the counter-enlightenment will be spelled out in chapters 2 and 3.

### **Berlin's Moral philosophy**

The second piece of Berlin's writing is on moral or political philosophy in which Berlin describes his idea of pluralism. In these writings, Berlin seems to **relate pluralism to (the enlightenment or traditional) liberalism**. For example, he seems to stress negative liberty more than the positive liberty. Many scholars including his followers claim that pluralism is part of or another version of traditional liberalism. Crowder (one of Berlin's followers), for example, claims that:

...pluralism's imperfectability brings with it a positive recommendation: only those forms of politics are plausible which acknowledge and accommodate the effects of imperfection, in particular dissatisfaction, alienation and significant social conflict. Prominent among political forms that meet this description is liberalism [...] In short, pluralism recommends liberalism by way of anti-utopianism.<sup>57</sup>

And

Berlin says now one thing, now another. In some places he denies any necessary connection between pluralism and liberalism. But elsewhere he asserts that pluralism does indeed imply liberalism, as when he refers to 'pluralism, with the measure of negative liberty it entails'.<sup>58</sup>

John Gray, in contrast to Crowder, says that pluralism, despite some overlapping ideas, is different in its main elements and structure from traditional liberalism. He says:

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<sup>57</sup> Crowder, 2004, 146

<sup>58</sup> Crowder, 2004, 143

In the pluralistic view, it is the recognition of the ultimate validity of conflicting claims, rather than the special claims of liberty (or liberalism), that is most stressed.<sup>59</sup>

And

Liberalism universalism is at odds with value pluralism and must be rejected.<sup>60</sup>

However, Gray says, based on the necessity of liberty in pluralism (e.g. the liberty to choose between conflicting values or to solve conflicts), he still believes that pluralism is another version of liberalism; but it is more a particular (or non-absolute) liberalism which allows people to choose illiberal values. Gray calls pluralism in his view ‘**agonist liberalism**’ (Gray’s idea will be spelled out in chapter 4). And if pluralism is liberalism (either as part of the traditional sort or in another version), pluralism tends to be a normative theory (PUT).

There will be an analysis in **chapter 4** to prove if pluralism is or can be another version of liberalism. This is done by taking the ideas of pluralism mentioned above and comparing them with the ideas of traditional liberalism. The analysis however turns out to be that pluralism and liberalism are significantly different from one another. And because of their differences, pluralism cannot be another version of liberalism.

When they are independent from one another, it means that Berlin does not write pluralism in the way to combine it with traditional liberalism or to be another version of liberalism and to make it a normative theory or PUT. But he seems to merely present his idea of pluralism which might have some overlapping elements with liberalism.

The proof that pluralism is **independent** from traditional or enlightenment liberalism will be spelled out in chapter 4.

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<sup>59</sup> Gray, *Berlin*, 1995, 167

<sup>60</sup> Crowder, 2004, 151

## **The second step**

When we can say that pluralism is independent from both versions of liberalism, we now move to the second step, that is, to prove if pluralism is PUT or PPT or PMT as mentioned above.

### **The evidences for PPT (pluralism as a particular theory)**

It seems that there are a number of indications in Berlin's ideas of pluralism to imply and/or to support the claim that pluralism is PPT rather than PUT. The indications are:

1) **Incompatibility**: When we can separate pluralism from the two versions of liberalism, we can see that the three theories' main ideas conflict with one another (this will be spelled out in details in chapters 2 to 4). We might be able to say that pluralism is incompatible with them. And if they are incompatible, according to Berlin, we cannot reconcile them into one and the same theory while we cannot have all of them at the same time.

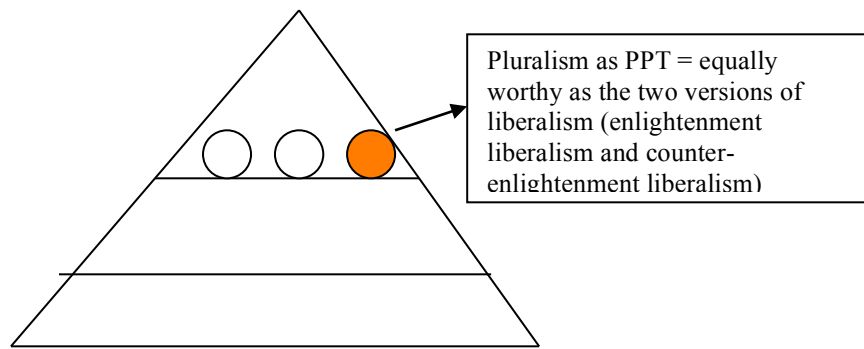
2) **Incommensurability**: When the three theories are incompatible, they tend to be incommensurable as well. As mentioned earlier, Berlin does not believe in any universal ranking or reasoning. He also does not believe in any impartial method to judge between values. But that is the only way to judge and arrive at the one best answer to anything. Without an appeal to a universal ranking, there is no basis to judge even pluralism as the one best theory (PUT). Even if Berlin wants pluralism to be a universal theory, he does not have any basis at all (referring to his rejection of universal ranking) to support the position. Moreover, when Berlin judges values, he takes into account the contexts of values. With contexts, he seems unable to judge any one of them as better than the other or as

the supreme value. It is likely that he would judge theories in the same way, that is, to take into account the contexts of the theories. And the outcome would be that he is unable to judge any one theory as better than the other or being PUT, even pluralism.

3) **Equally worthy**: when theories are incommensurable and Berlin seems unable to judge one as better, he tends to justify them (pluralism and the two versions of liberalism) as equally worthy as one another in the same way that he justifies ultimate values held in different contexts. He probably refers to the three ways that he uses to justify ultimate values as equally worthy to justify these theories as equally worthy as well. That is, he might justify them by their conceptions or by the respect and commitment people have for them or by the mutual understanding between people in the different contexts. The result is likely that the three theories are equal to one another.

4) **Particular theory**: when they are equal to one another but we cannot have all of them at the same time (since they are incompatible as mentioned), it follows that we have to choose each of them according to context. Pluralism as one of the three must be chosen according to context as well. There should not be any exception for pluralism when pluralism is equally worthy to the other two. This can show that pluralism is a particular theory. Although there is no claim from Berlin saying directly that pluralism is a particular theory, all indications as already mentioned lead to the conclusion that it is a particular theory (PPT).

Pluralism as a particular theory can be shown in picture as:



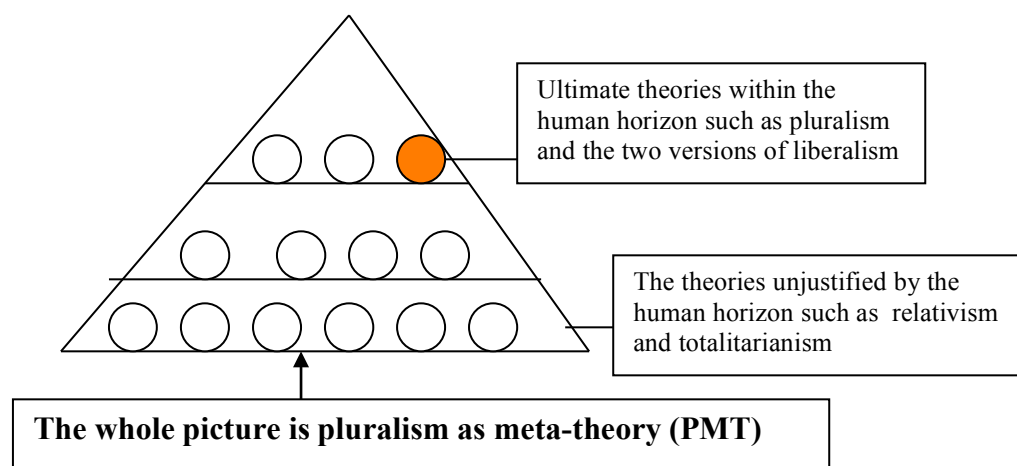
### The evidences for PMT

Since Berlin tends to believe that the three theories (pluralism and the two versions of liberalism) are equally worthy as one another, he might justify some other theories as equally worthy as these theories as well. For example, there are some indications that Berlin might justify **multiculturalism and communitarianism** as equal to pluralism as well. However, he does not accept every theory. For example, he claims not to accept **relativism, utilitarianism and totalitarianism**. To judge by the theories that he justifies and those that he rejects, it seems like Berlin refers to **the objective human horizon** to select or to justify them. This is because for the theories that he justifies such as the two versions of liberalism, multiculturalism and communitarianism, they are within the human horizon of non-violence and psychological conditions of understanding and empathy. But for relativism, it is not within the human horizon in that it does not have any justification of values, so it might allow violence or something beyond understanding and empathy to happen. Utilitarianism and totalitarianism, by their principles, can also lead to violence. While Berlin does not accept the theories that could lead to violence, it can be implied that Berlin refers to the human horizon to justify theories in the same way as he does with values.

And if he refers to the human horizon to justify theories, it means **his attitude or judgment of theories is according to the pluralist framework** which accepts a

plurality of theories as equally worthy (including pluralism) so long as all are within the human horizon as the universal criterion. The pluralist framework in this case **acts as a meta-theory (PMT)**, or the theory that Berlin uses to manage all acceptable theories. It should be noted that the term ‘theory’ means only the ‘attitude’ towards political and ethical theories rather than having a formal meaning that involves the implication of the institutions.

Pluralism as meta-theory can be shown in picture as:



According to all the above indications, it is likely that pluralism is PPT and PMT. The detail of the two proofs (of PPT and PMT) will be spelled out in **chapter 5**.

**To conclude part 2**, there are three possible positions for Berlin’s pluralism which are PUT (pluralism as universal theory), PPT (pluralism as particular theory) and PMT (pluralism as meta-theory). The PUT and PMT position would make pluralism collapse into monism while the PPT position would preserve its pluralist position.

In order to know the exact position of pluralism, we need to look at Berlin’s writings. There are two separate strands to his writings which are the writings on Russian history and the writings on moral philosophy (or pluralism). The first

describes and praises three Russian thinkers who are found to be counter-enlightenment liberals. The latter on the other hand describes the ideas of pluralism but seems to connect it with enlightenment liberalism. We need to look at both of them.

Many scholars believe that pluralism is part of or another version of either side of liberalism: the enlightenment one or the counter-enlightenment one. And if pluralism is combined with either of them, it will be PUT or a universal theory.

However, the assumption of the thesis is that the position of pluralism is not PUT since it is not combined with either side of liberalism. And it is more likely to be PPT since Berlin seems to rank pluralism as equally worthy as the two versions of liberalism (and some other theories). And, at the same time, it is likely to be PMT as well since Berlin seems to refer to the pluralist framework to manage all acceptable theories (including pluralism). The arguments to support this assumption will be made in the following chapters.



## **Chapter 2 Berlin's Russian history**

As mentioned in the first chapter, the first piece of Berlin's writing is on Russian history in which Berlin seems to present three Russian thinkers – Herzen, Tolstoy and Turgenev – as heroes or as superior to all other groups of intelligentsia, both the left (the socialists) and the right (the conservative liberals). Readers understand from their heroic position and aspects which overlap with Berlin's pluralism that Berlin intends to present them as pluralists. And if Berlin actually presents them as pluralists and puts them on top of the ranking, it means that he intends to present pluralism as normative (or PUT).

Put simply, the point to observe here is that while Berlin presents the three thinkers as superior to all other groups of intellectuals, does he intend to present them as pluralists? If he does intend that, it would lead to the conclusion that Berlin intends to present pluralism as a normative theory or PUT – through his description of the position of the three thinkers.

This chapter will discuss Berlin's descriptions of Russian history (how he interprets and/or decodes it) and his descriptions of the three thinkers (how he interprets their ideas). There will also be some inconsistencies between Berlin's interpretation of Russian history and the interpretation of other historians. All observations in this chapter will be the background for analysing the position that Berlin actually gives to the three thinkers in the next chapter.

### **Berlin's writings on Russian history**

Most of Berlin's writings on Russian history concentrate on the mid-nineteenth century. In his writings, Berlin does not refer to any theoretical or philosophical approach. He describes only some important incidents in the period and the roles of some Russian intellectuals. Most scholars therefore do not pay much attention to this historical piece of Berlin's work as they consider them to be of little value to philosophy. However, if we read Berlin's historical writings more carefully, we might realize that they do have some philosophical elements hidden in the historical contents.

Berlin starts describing Russian history from around 1840 in terms of various groups of ideas incompatible with one another spreading around the country.<sup>61</sup>

Most of them came from a small group of Russian intellectuals (Berlin refers to them as the ‘intelligentsia’) who had the opportunity to get an education in the West, such as those who studied in France and Germany before returning to Russia with Western ideas (or ideals) in their heads. Later on, it became possible to divide these intellectuals and their followers into two groups: first were those who believed deeply in the ideals of Hegel and Marx and dedicated their life to achieving those ideals since they believed those ideals could resolve the problems in Russia. Second were those who opposed the first group by rejecting all socialist ideals and dedicated their life to achieving liberal ideals. Sometimes, Berlin categorises these intellectuals as of the ‘left’ and the ‘right’. By dedicating their life to their ideals, both sides are considered by Berlin as extremist groups. And it is obvious that these opposed sets of ideals circulating in Russia at that time were in conflict with one another.

While he claims the ideas were in conflict in Russia at that time, his narrative seems to suggest that there are different levels among them which are as follows:

**First, the Russian empire of Tsar Nicolas I** is at the lowest level as Berlin claims that the Tsar’s government did many harmful things to the people, including the impact of widespread corruption and the rejection of all freedom of speech. For example, he says

[the year 1848] the gigantic straitjacket of bureaucratic and military control which, if not devised, was reinforced and pulled tighter by Nicolas I, appeared, despite frequent cases of stupidity or corruption, to be conspicuously successful.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> All references to Berlin’s Russian historical writing are taken from RT - *Russian Thinkers* (2008) and POI - *The Power of Ideas* (2000).

<sup>62</sup> RT, 1

Or he seems desperate about the oppression on the part of the Tsar. He quotes Uspensky to describe the atmosphere of Russia at the time:

‘one could not move, one could not even dream; it was dangerous to give any sign of thought [...] there was not a single point of light on the horizon...’,<sup>63</sup>

In general, Berlin seems deeply dissatisfied with the Russian government and believes that they are the cause of Russian’s backward condition at the time.

**Second**, Berlin seems to put **the two opposed sets of extremists**, consisting of **both left and right**, on a higher level than the Tsar, while both seem to exist on the same level as one another. In this case, he seems to believe that the two groups aimed for progress in Russia or tried to change the country for the better. Yet they were both limited as a result of the extremity of their beliefs and actions which finally resulted in violence. As Kelly points out:

[for Berlin], both determinism [the left] and relativism [the right], he argues, are founded on fallacious, because one-sided, interpretations of experience.<sup>64</sup>

The reason why their ideas led to violence was because they exaggerate Western ideas and make them more serious and/or extreme than the original. These extreme ideas were considered by Berlin as having their own unique style, or some people described them as in the ‘Russian style’. Berlin explains:

Whatever the reasons, there is no doubt that ideas were taken more seriously and played a greater and more peculiar role, in Russian history than anywhere else.<sup>65</sup>

And he says

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<sup>63</sup> RT, 15

<sup>64</sup> Kelly, LIB, 8.

<sup>65</sup> POI, 70

...Chaadaev drew them: the weapons were ideas which whatever their origins, in Russia became matters of the deepest concern – often of life and death – as they never were in England or France...<sup>66</sup>

Berlin therefore sometimes calls them the ‘exaggerated westerners’.<sup>67</sup> Kelly claims that they did not only exaggerate Western ideas to make them more extreme, they also distorted and misused them. Kelly says:

[They] borrowed from the west and often misunderstood and misapplied.<sup>68</sup>

In this case, they could agree with radical revolution or violent activities if that was the only way to achieve their ideals. Berlin explains the extremists:

If violence was the only means to a given end, then there might be circumstances in which it was right to employ it...<sup>69</sup>

This can also be seen as their ‘fanatical passion’ in ideals. It belonged to extremists of both sides and later became the characteristic of the Russian intelligentsia.

**Third**, according to the negative effects of the extremists, Berlin situates the other group of Russian intellectuals, who were moderate in their ideas, at the highest level of all. Most notable among these intellectuals are three in particular – **Herzen, Tolstoy and Turgenev** – whose ideas, according to some of Berlin’s followers, have aspects in common with pluralism. Kelly, for example, understands that the three thinkers are pluralists as she mentioned Herzen:

[for Berlin] only a consistent pluralism can protect human freedom from the depredations of the systematizers. Such a pluralism, he has pointed out, was fully articulated in the ideas of a thinker whose originality had hitherto been largely overlooked: Herzen’.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> POI, 75

<sup>67</sup> RT, 125

<sup>68</sup> Kelly, RT, 1

<sup>69</sup> RT, 23

These three thinkers seemed to have similar ideas to one another which were, for example, to reject universal ideals, to refuse to join in with both extreme groups and to strongly disagree with the sacrifice of people's lives for ideals.

Herzen believed that there was no universal ideal or solution to all the problems in Russian society and that the search for a universal solution could lead to the destruction of people's individual liberty.<sup>71</sup> Tolstoy denied all the existing universal ideals since he believed that human beings had too limited a capacity to discover them and the existing knowledge that we all had so far was insufficient to conclude that anything was a universal ideal. Therefore, Tolstoy denied committing to any ideals at all.<sup>72</sup> Turgenev always asked all groups of the intelligentsia to compromise with one another and sometimes to compromise with the authoritarian order. He rejected all actions that could lead to radical revolutions or violence. These three intellects are Berlin's heroes in his narrative of Russian history. He once refers to them as the 'three moral preachers of genius'.<sup>73</sup>

While it is clear that different levels exist in Berlin's historical writings, there is no indication that he takes into account the contexts of each political group, the incommensurability or the parity of positions between them. What he does is to arrange them at different levels in relation to his own selected heroes.

If we put Berlin's historical narrative **onto a chart**, it would be as follows:

[1 The final end] *the moderate three thinkers*

[2 The middle rank] *the extreme left* – [on-a-par] – *the extreme right*

[3 The lowest rank] *the Russian empire, Tsar Nicolas I*

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<sup>70</sup> Kelly, RT, 29 (xxix)

<sup>71</sup> Berlin, POI, 96.

<sup>72</sup> RT, 84-92.

<sup>73</sup> Kelly, RT, 29.

It looks like Berlin intends to suggest that in the period there was also a group of moderate intellectuals who were independent from the two extremist groups and this moderate group was better or superior to all other groups.

And by presenting the moderate group as the final end, if Berlin actually believes them to be pluralists as Kelly and some of Berlin's followers claim, this would make it look like Berlin tries to present pluralism a normative or PUT.

Before analysing whether Berlin intends to present the three thinkers as pluralists, it is worth turning to Berlin's descriptions of each of them to see their main ideas and which Berlin emphasizes first, so we can analyse the exact position that Berlin gives them thereafter.

### **Berlin's three heroes**

While Berlin interprets the three thinkers as the leading group of the intelligentsia, it is not yet very clear if Berlin interprets them as pluralists. Sometimes the way Berlin describes them leads to the suggestion that they are pluralists, while other times he calls them liberals. Berlin is not consistent. The following will consider Berlin's descriptions of each of them; how he reads them; and the elements that Berlin believes to be their main ideas.

### **Berlin's Herzen: a revolutionist without fanaticism**

For Berlin, Herzen seems to be the first hero (among the three) whom Berlin admires the most. Berlin says that Herzen always had in his mind the motivation to do something for the people or the country. He had a negative attitude towards the Tsar, in the same way as the rest of the intelligentsia. So he had performed a number of revolutionist activities to oppose the Tsar. For example, he established the first free anti-tsarist Russian paper 'The Bell'. Although it was officially prohibited, it was very popular in Russia. And it was told that even the Emperor himself read it. He also wrote a number of novels. His most famous one was 'From the Other Shore', which showed his opinions on the European revolutions

of 1848 and 1849. Herzen also supported Russian populism and supported the socialist peasant commune. As a result of these activities, he was considered a socialist. However, his first value was individual liberty rather than social welfare or community. Herzen admired Hegel greatly but interpreted Hegel in a different way from others. That is, he interpreted Hegel in his own unique way. Berlin says: 'he turned his Hegelianism into something peculiar, personal to himself'.<sup>74</sup> As a result, Herzen might not be a socialist as understood in the general term but had his own way of being a socialist. Berlin claims that, although Herzen was a close friend with Bakunin, he was not a socialist in the same way as Bakunin. He had his own way.

Herzen's most outstanding characteristic is that he refused to support all violent rebellions and this made him disagree with his close friend Bakunin. Berlin says: ' [he was] even more against his own close friend Bakunin, who persisted in trying to stir up violent rebellion, involving torture and martyrdom, for the sake of a dim, confused and distant goal'.<sup>75</sup> The following elements are what Berlin describes to be Herzen's main ideas as a unique socialist:

### *Liberty*

Herzen distrusted despotism the most so he distrusted the Russian regime the most as well. He says that people need freedom especially for self-realisation. Herzen says (according to Berlin's description):

Why is liberty valuable? Because it is an end in itself, because it is what it is.<sup>76</sup>

He believed freedom was an end. Therefore, his political goal was people's freedom. And he seemed to have only one goal. Herzen says (according to Berlin's description):

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<sup>74</sup> RT, 218

<sup>75</sup> RT, 225

<sup>76</sup> RT, 225

Herzen's most constant goal is the preservation of individual liberty.<sup>77</sup>

Although Herzen was committed to freedom, he did not allow people to sacrifice their life for it. That is, for Herzen, freedom was not an absolute ideal. It was not superior to life and it was not worth giving up people's life for. If we need to choose between freedom and life, Herzen certainly recommended choosing life over freedom. Herzen says (according to Berlin):

The purpose of the struggle for liberty is not liberty tomorrow, it is liberty today, the liberty of living individuals with their own individual ends...<sup>78</sup>

In this case, we can interpret Herzen's freedom as *a particular value* which could be sacrificed in some necessary cases especially to preserve people's life.

Therefore, although Herzen had performed some revolutionist activities in order to promote freedom, he did them very carefully so as not to sacrifice people's life for it. The revolutions he had participated in can be seen as 'careful revolutions' which gave priority to people's life over freedom.

#### *No absolute/ the subjectivity of values*

While Herzen was committed to freedom as his only political goal, he did not claim it was an absolute value; he always allowed the possibility of choosing other values apart from freedom in some cases. And this belief in the non-absolute character of freedom makes him come closer to pluralism. Kelly explains Herzen's idea:

...given that individuals and cultures have frequently chosen values incompatible with political freedom, one cannot assert that liberal forms of life will always provide the optimal framework for human self-creation. One can answer only for one's own culture and for oneself.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> RT, 236

<sup>78</sup> RT, 225

<sup>79</sup> Kelly, LIB, 20



Herzen believed that the absolute character of values that the extremists of both sides believed in was just a dream or an illusion. There was no value prior to human beings. In other words, he did not believe in a priori values. What he believed was that human beings should create values for themselves. Kelly explains:

He believed that values were not found in an impersonal, objective realm, but were created by human beings...<sup>80</sup>

He even did not believe the peasant commune that he consistently supported to be absolute. He said that it was the best political activity for achieving freedom but it might turn out to be ineffective in the future.

...even the peasant commune did not, after all, as he pointed out, preserve Russia from slavery [...] we must try to do our best; and it is always possible that we shall fail.<sup>81</sup>

### *Particularity or contextuality*

Since Herzen rejected absolute ideals, he seemed to believe that all values were dependent on contexts or situations.

Herzen wrote a novel called 'Who is to Blame?' [...] the main point and what is most characteristic of Herzen is that the situation possesses, in principle, no solution.<sup>82</sup>

...for many it [contingency in nature] is a source of pessimism. Berlin, like Herzen, celebrated it as the ground of moral freedom.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Kelly, LIB, 30

<sup>81</sup> RT, 230

<sup>82</sup> RT, 231

<sup>83</sup> Kelly, LIB, 29

He stressed the issue of contexts or situations quite often in his writings and claimed that the conception of freedom should be changed according to situations as well as one's own experiences. That is, the conception of freedom should be changed if the environment in the world changed. Gavin explains Herzen's idea:

Man's freedom then was not atomistic but rather consisted in the process of responding to the  
press of experience.<sup>84</sup>

Contexts or situations also influenced Herzen's perspectives. That is, he changed his perspectives according to the situations or experiences in his life which frequently changed. Confino says:

Life experience was this paramount in the formation of Herzen's ideas, for they were always intimately connected to existential issues. The centrality of existential factors in the formation of Herzen's ideas explains also, to a certain extent, the changes and fluctuations of his views over time and from one period to the next in connection with his personal and political life experiences.<sup>85</sup>

### *No final solution*

As a result of his belief in contexts or situations, he claimed that there was no final solution to all the problems. Or, if there were solutions, they were many and none was the best solution of all. This was the aspect of Herzen's ideas that was different from Hegel's despite the fact that he admired Hegel greatly.

The chief effect upon him of Hegelianism seems to have been the belief that no specific theory or single doctrine, no one interpretation of life, above all, no simple coherent well constructed schema [...] could conceivably be true solutions to real problems...' and 'he was sceptical if only because he believed (whether or not he derived this view from Hegel) that there could not in

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<sup>84</sup> Gavin W, (1974) 'Herzen and James: freedom as radical' in *Studies in Soviet Thought*, Vol 14, No3/4, 215

<sup>85</sup> Confino M, (2003) 'Isaiah Berlin, Alexander Herzen, and Russia's Elusive Counter-Enlightenment', Mali, J, & Wokler, R (ed), *Isaiah Berlin's Counter-Enlightenment*. Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society.184

principle be any simple or final answer to any genuine human problem [...] the answer could never be clear cut and neat.<sup>86</sup>

### *Understanding*

Herzen tried to understand the ideas or groups of people who were opposed to him, and tried to see the positive side of opposed ideas or groups even though he did not accept them.

...he had a unique insight into the inner feel of social and political predicaments and with it a remarkable power of analysis and exposition.<sup>87</sup>

### *Compromise/no sacrifice*

Since he tried to understand opposing groups' every idea, he suggested that we should compromise between all opposing ideas and tried to find the middle way between them. Berlin tells Herzen's story of dilettantism [representing the liberals] and Buddhism [representing the extreme left] and says:

Between these two poles it is necessary to find some compromise and Herzen believed that if one studied life in a sober detached and objective manner, one might perhaps be able to create some kind of tension, a sort of dialectical compromise between these opposite ideals.<sup>88</sup>

In situations where there were conflicts between the extreme left and right, he rejected them both. He declared himself clearly not to support both of them but stayed in the middle ground between them.

He is terrified of the oppressors, but he is terrified of the liberators too.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> RT, 218

<sup>87</sup> RT, 237

<sup>88</sup> RT, 219

<sup>89</sup> RT, 227

While staying in the middle, he encouraged both sides to enact revolutions or to change the country for the better by non-violent means. He distrusted violence and rejected radical revolutions that demanded people sacrifice their life. Berlin quotes Herzen:

‘one must open men’s eyes not tear them out’,<sup>90</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Herzen was a close friend with Bakunin but he wrote a letter to Bakunin warning him not to use violent means to achieve his goal.

His response [...] addressed to Bakunin where he affirms the absurdity of the primitive faith in absolutes that had led in the past to emancipation by means of the guillotine, enlightenment through the whip.<sup>91</sup>

For Herzen, there was nothing more valuable than life itself. We should protect our and the lives of others and not sacrifice them to any values or ideals. He admired the idea of egoism which asked people to value their life more than any other thing. Berlin explains Herzen:

For Herzen ‘the goal of life is life itself’.<sup>92</sup>

And

...he utters a great appeal for what he calls the value of egoism. He declares that one of the great dangers to our society is that individuals will be tamed and suppressed disinterestedly by idealists in the name of altruism, in the name of measures designed to make the majority happy.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Kelly, LIB, 27

<sup>91</sup> Kelly, LIB, 26

<sup>92</sup> RT, 221

<sup>93</sup> RT, 229

He claimed that the death of one person was equal to the death of a whole group of people. And the sacrifice of people's life did not change the country for the better but for worse.

The death of a single man is no less absurd and unintelligible than the death of the entire human race.<sup>94</sup>

And

...[the sacrifice of life for ideals is] the replacing of an old tyranny with a new and sometimes far more hideous one...<sup>95</sup>

Overall, he believed in the opposite approach to that favoured by most of the intelligentsia including the socialists who encouraged people to sacrifice their life for ideals.

And this he maintains not merely against the Western socialists and liberals among whom he lived but even more against his own close friend...<sup>96</sup>

### *Sense of reality*

Herzen had committed to a sense of reality so for him all the political activities that he performed must not serve abstract (or distant) ideals or the life (and liberty) of people in the next generations. Instead they should improve the life (or liberty) of people in the present.

Herzen embodies his central principle – that the goal of life is life itself, that to sacrifice the present to some vague and unpredictable future is a form of delusion.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> RT, 222

<sup>95</sup> RT, 220

<sup>96</sup> RT, 225

<sup>97</sup> RT, 221

And

..one generation must not be condemned to the role of being a mere means to the welfare of its remote descendants.<sup>98</sup>

Berlin claims that Herzen was committed to a sense of reality more than other members of the intelligentsia at the time or even more than all other philosophers in general. So Herzen encourages other activists to enact change gradually and/or in a peaceful way.

Herzen's sense of reality, in particular of the need for, and the price of, revolution, is unique in his own, and perhaps in any, age.<sup>99</sup>

And

Progress must adjust itself to the actual pace of historical change...<sup>100</sup>

### *Other counter-enlightenment elements*

Apart from all the above, there seem to be other elements which Herzen was committed to which were close to counter-enlightenment ideas. The elements were for example the belief that there was no system or pattern to all things. There was no objective law but only passion.

There are no timetable, no cosmic patterns; there is only the 'fire of life', passion, will, improvisation...<sup>101</sup>

Herzen believed that rationality was false. Actually, Herzen used to believe in rationality. But when the revolution in 1849 broke out and people died, he

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<sup>98</sup> RT, 222

<sup>99</sup> RT, 236

<sup>100</sup> RT, 227

<sup>101</sup> RT, 222

realised that the incident resulted from the intelligentsia's deep commitment to rationality – the intelligentsia included him at the time – so he felt guilty and disappointed. Thereafter, he rejected rationality.

Herzen had himself once believed in these foundations (although never with simple and absolute faith) and because this belief came toppling down and was utterly destroyed in the fearful cataclysms of 1848 and 1849 in which almost every one of his idols proved to have feet of clay...<sup>102</sup>

Herzen also rejected all knowledge that came from metaphysical or philosophical theories. In fact, he rejected all academic doctrines as he believed that they could not help to resolve problems in the real world. There was no clear solution for all the world's problems. His rejection of academic knowledge partly came from his sense of reality which preferred real life over distant ideals, doctrines or theories.

My past and thought is dominated by no single clear purpose, it is not committed to a thesis; its author was not enslaved by any formula or any political doctrine [...] he was among the very few thinkers of his time who in principle rejected all general solutions...<sup>103</sup>

And

...ethical doctrines [are] not fitted to the chaos of life.<sup>104</sup>

To conclude, it seems that Herzen was a liberal in socialist's clothes since individual liberty was his only political goal but he relied on socialist activities to achieve the goal. His position therefore can be either liberal or socialist or both. However, according to Berlin's writings, apart from liberty, Herzen had also committed himself to subjectivity of values, contexts, compromise, a sense of reality and some counter-enlightenment elements. Some of these elements such

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<sup>102</sup> RT, 226

<sup>103</sup> RT, 238

<sup>104</sup> RT, 231

as contexts and compromise are close to Berlin's pluralism. So Herzen can be a pluralist as well.

Berlin does not make it clear what he believes him to be. We still cannot conclude now as to the position that Berlin gives him. That analysis will come in the next chapter.

### **Berlin's Tolstoy: a fox who wants to be a hedgehog**

Tolstoy is Berlin's second preference among the three. Berlin admires Tolstoy to a large extent but seems to admire him less than Herzen. This might be because Tolstoy had conflict in his mind all the time. Berlin says that actually Tolstoy believed in a diversity of values (as close to pluralism) but he still wished there were an absolute truth somewhere. So he tried all his life to search for it.

His famous novel was *War and Peace*. It was very well-known but received a number of criticisms as well. For example, Vasily Botkin says Tolstoy's novel was 'superficial'. And the critic Nikolay Akhsharumov says 'it is fortunate for us that the author is a better artist than thinker'.<sup>105</sup>

Berlin seems to disagree with those critics. He admires Tolstoy's works immensely and claims that they had a great influence on society and people. He says that there are two distinct parts in Tolstoy life. The first part concerns his role as an author while the second part is as the prophet of 'personal and social regeneration'. It is his second part that is 'regarded as important'. Berlin says 'there are philosophical theological ethical psychological political economic studies of the later Tolstoy in all his aspects'.<sup>106</sup>

For his personality, Tolstoy seemed to be reserved. He was not open to others. Moreover, he was sometimes aggressive. So he did not have many friends – especially writer friends.

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<sup>105</sup> RT, 29

<sup>106</sup> RT 31



According to Berlin, Tolstoy's main ideas are:

### *Liberty*

Tolstoy, like most of the intelligentsia, distrusted the Tsar's regime. He was committed to individual liberty. Liberty seemed to be his ultimate value. But sometimes he claimed to admire some other values as well such as equality, justice and duty.

...that men have a right to be free and also equal, are all eternal and absolute truths.<sup>107</sup>

The liberty that he was committed to however did not have a general sense. He had his own unique definition of freedom. It tends to be the freedom from all knowledge (Herzen seemed to have this definition as well since he also rejected abstract doctrines) and/or freedom to go back to nature.

He believed in individual liberty and, indeed, in progress too, but in a queer sense of his own.<sup>108</sup>

### *Subjectivity*

Tolstoy also did not believe in absolute truths. He claimed that all truths were relative to contexts or situations. This is similar to Herzen. However, Tolstoy seemed to be more extreme than Herzen in that he rejected the existence of almost everything. Sometimes, he looked like a nihilist.

We do not ourselves claim to base our education (or other forms of interference with human beings) on the knowledge of absolute truth, we must at least stop torturing others in the name of what we do not know.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> RT, 290

<sup>108</sup> RT, 275

<sup>109</sup> RT, 296

And

...to see the truth [...] as varying in different circumstances and times and places...<sup>110</sup>

*Rejection of universal ideals, rationality, science, philosophy, and all theories*

Since he seemed to reject everything, Tolstoy claimed to reject all academic knowledge no matter whether universal ideals in philosophy or rationality and sciences. In fact, he rejected all existing knowledge of all subjects.

But his conversations with the most advanced Western authorities on education, and observation of their methods, had convinced him that these methods were at best worthless, at worse harmful...<sup>111</sup>

And

...try to create rational patterns of life in accordance with rational theories is to swim against the stream of nature [...] and torture human beings to fit social and economic systems against which their natures cry out.<sup>112</sup>

For Tolstoy, knowledge especially from the West was worse. He believed that they taught in a way that distorted truths from what they were (in nature). He made fun of Western education in his novel – *War and Peace*.

They have a confused and perfectly correct feeling that the schoolmaster wants them to say something unintelligible – that the fish is not a sigh – that whatever it is he wants them to say, is something they will never think of.<sup>113</sup>

Apart from the distortion of knowledge, Tolstoy believed that knowledge often dominated people's minds or forced them to think and behave in specific ways. For Tolstoy, it was as bad as despotism. Since he distrusted despotism the most,

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<sup>110</sup> RT, 275

<sup>111</sup> RT, 280

<sup>112</sup> RT, 287

<sup>113</sup> RT, 281

he distrusted academic knowledge at the same rate as well. In this case, he also distrusted progressivists (such as the extreme left and right) who relied on their knowledge to develop the country.

Certainly, the people's condition will never be improved until not only the tsarist bureaucracy, but the 'progressists', as Tolstoy called them, the vain and doctrinaire intelligentsia, are prised off the people's necks.<sup>114</sup>

Because of his rejection of knowledge, he believed that actual freedom of the individual consisted in being free from those doctrines or theories and went back to nature. By doing this, individuals would liberate their inner nature, realise their goodness and live in a complete harmony with the world. This is how his conception of freedom is different from the general one.

### *Back to nature*

To say that Tolstoy distrusted the progressists is in fact to say he distrusted the intellectuals (who were likely to become the progressivists thereafter) since they acted as if they were superior to normal people. Moreover, Tolstoy believed that they taught people in the wrong way – to separate their life from nature or to live far away from nature and to find truths in knowledge or philosophy. In fact, all truths were in nature and we should return to live in nature in order to find them.

The enemy is always the same: experts, professionals, men who claim special authority over other men.<sup>115</sup>

And

...simple people (peasants, Cossacks and so on) have a more natural and correct attitude towards these basic values than civilised men.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> RT, 276

<sup>115</sup> RT, 282

<sup>116</sup> RT, 283

### *No laws in history*

Tolstoy was interested in history and the problem of historical truths. He studied history to its root and realised that there was no such thing as the general laws of history as Hegel believed. That is, he did not agree with Hegel and Marx on the general laws that govern historical evolution.

...in one of his letters he described Hegel's writings as unintelligible...<sup>117</sup>

For him, history was unscientific and unsystematic. Things happened by accident rather than according to any laws of nature. But the historians tried to make them systematic so that they could fit them into the laws of nature. In this case, Tolstoy claimed that history was something historians made up. It was unreal.

Everything is forced into a standard mould invented by the historian.<sup>118</sup>

And

[He had] a feeling that history as it is written by historians makes claims which it cannot satisfy because like metaphysical philosophy it pretends to be something it is not – namely a science capable of arriving at conclusions which are certain.<sup>119</sup>

Tolstoy showed his view on the inauthenticity of history in his novel where the narrative was about the contrast between individual life and an unreal historical narrative. For him, history merely consisted in the narratives which historians created. For example, there were always heroes in history – some people who made incredible things happen – while Tolstoy claimed that in reality those heroes did not actually make the incidents happen. The incidents happened by

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<sup>117</sup> RT, 33

<sup>118</sup> RT, 35

<sup>119</sup> RT, 34

themselves; they happened accidentally, not by the actions or the decisions of heroes.

The greater the claim, the greater the lie: Napoleon is consequently the most pitiable, the most contemptible of all the actors in the great tragedy.<sup>120</sup>

### *Self contradiction*

For Berlin, Tolstoy was a fox who wanted to be a hedgehog. That is he refused to believe in any absolute truths or the existence of them but at the same time he tried to search for them all his life. There was a contradiction inside him between the pluralist vision of reality and monist vision of reality. He seemed to be struggling with this contradiction all his life. Kelly says:

He was thus constantly in contradiction with himself, perceiving reality in its multiplicity but believing only in 'one vast, unitary whole'.<sup>121</sup>

Probably, Tolstoy was not aware of the contradiction. He probably did not know that he was a fox or he probably knew but did not accept it. He always believed himself to be a hedgehog.

Tolstoy was himself not unaware of the problem, and did his best to falsify the answer. The hypothesis I wish to offer is that Tolstoy was by nature a fox, but believed in being a hedgehog; that his gifts and achievement are one thing and his beliefs and consequently his interpretation of his own achievement, another.<sup>122</sup>

Another reason why Berlin claims Tolstoy is a fox is because Tolstoy supported the idea of contextual or particular incidents rather than absolute or universal ones.

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<sup>120</sup> RT, 40

<sup>121</sup> RT, introduction, 31.

<sup>122</sup> RT, 26

His genius lay in the perception of specific properties, the almost inexpressive individual quality in virtue of which the given object is uniquely different from all others. Nevertheless, he longed for a universal explanatory principle that is, the perception of resemblances or common origins, or single purpose...<sup>123</sup>

With his intention to find truths, he believed that, if he rejected all the unreal properties in history and in knowledge (such as philosophy and sciences), he would finally discover the truths hidden in it. The result was that he destroyed or rejected everything but still could not find any truth in it.

He certainly had no desire to destroy for the sake of destruction. What he desired, more than anything else in the world was to know the truth.<sup>124</sup>

And

...always hoping that the desperately-sought-for real unity would presently emerge from the destruction of the shams and frauds.<sup>125</sup>

That was the reason why he does not believe in anything at all including history and philosophy or all the knowledge discovered previously. Tolstoy claimed that all existing knowledge was either false or insufficient to lead to truth. But he still believed, deep in his heart, that there might be absolute truths somewhere in the universe, and we might be able to know them one day in the future. This confirms the contradiction that his final goal – which was to find truths – was at odds with his dedication or his hard work which proved that there were no truths at all.

Another contradiction was that, on the one hand, he was committed to individual liberty (and sometimes some other values such as equality, duty and justice) and he claimed it is necessary to educate people about this. But, on the other hand, he

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<sup>123</sup> RT, 54

<sup>124</sup> RT, 274

<sup>125</sup> RT 55

claimed that we should throw away all values, theories and knowledge and go back to intuition and/or nature in which there should not be any teaching at all. Berlin questions:

What there should be; on one side innocence, on the other education [...] Tolstoy wavered and struggled all his life.<sup>126</sup>

It looks like Tolstoy had two contrasting opinions. He could be the dualist who was committed to 1) absolute truths at the same time as particular truths and committed to 2) education for people at the same time as rejection of education and a return to nature.

### *Sense of reality*

Similarly to Herzen, Tolstoy had a sense of reality. But, for Tolstoy, the meaning seemed to be different from Herzen's. That is, Tolstoy's sense of reality was concerned more with life in nature over life in ideals or theories while, for Herzen, a sense of reality was concerned with the value of people's life (in general, not necessarily in nature) over ideals.

He had far more respect for all forms of real life [...] than for the world of books, reviews, critics, professors, political discussions and talk about ideals...<sup>127</sup>

With his admiration in natural life, Tolstoy believed that the only way to acquire knowledge was by observation (of nature) rather than by scientific method or rationality.

The answer is about us everywhere [...] if only we would not close our eyes or look everywhere but at what is there, staring us in the face, the clear, simple, irresistible truth.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> RT, 297

<sup>127</sup> RT, 279

<sup>128</sup> RT, 283

And

He believed that only by patient empirical observation could any knowledge be obtained; that this knowledge (through theories) is always inadequate, that simple people often know the truth better than learned men because their observation of men and nature is less clouded by empty theories...<sup>129</sup>

Again, his belief in the sense of reality (and/or the observation of nature to acquire truths) was too strong to be compatible with his goal to search for unknown abstract ideals which tend to be beyond observation. There was no harmony between his belief and his goal but he seemed to be committed to them both.

### *Compromise*

Like Herzen, Tolstoy hated wars and killing. Although some of his characters and ideas were similar to Maistre, he differed from him in that he did not support wars and killing while Maistre did support them.

It is true that both Maistre and Tolstoy attach the greatest possible importance to war and conflict but Maistre, like Proudhon after him, glorifies war, and declares it to be mysterious and divine, while Tolstoy detests it...<sup>130</sup>

Like Herzen again, he did not like the extremists. He denied joining in with them and condemned them in their political repression and violence.

He paid visits to the literary salons, both right and left wing, but he seemed at ease in none of them.<sup>131</sup>

To conclude, it seems that Tolstoy held the positions of both pluralist and monist at the same time. He was a pluralist (according to Berlin) by his effort to show

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<sup>129</sup> RT, 61

<sup>130</sup> RT, 74

<sup>131</sup> RT, 278



that truths are particular while he was a monist by his deep belief in the existence of absolute truths hidden somewhere. Some people however might read him to be a nihilist due to his rejection of almost all knowledge and theories.

According to Berlin's writings, as presented above, Tolstoy was committed to liberty as his ultimate value. And he was also committed to the subjectivity (or the particularity) of values, the natural life (or intuition), a sense of reality (with respect to the life in nature) and compromise. He rejected all academic knowledge and the laws of nature (especially in history). This showed that Tolstoy's main ideas were very close to Herzen's. And some of them, such as the subjectivity (or particularity) of values, and compromise, are close to Berlin's pluralism. While Berlin claims that Tolstoy occupied both positions (the pluralist and the monist) at the same time, we will analyse his real position, according to Berlin's writings, in the next chapter.

### **Berlin's Turgenev: A compromise liberal**

Flexibility and compromise are the characteristics which Berlin stresses the most in his description of Turgenev. Turgenev was a gentle, charming and agreeable writer. He was also very cautious and frightened of all critical opinions on him. His friend, the poet Yakov Polosky, described him as 'kind and soft as wax, feminine and without character'.<sup>132</sup>

Turgenev did not want to get involved with politics but somehow his novels such as *Fathers and Children* had a significant influence on people's political opinions including those of the intelligentsia. Berlin says:

Turgenev as a pure artist drawn into political strife against his will...<sup>133</sup>

His novel also influenced the political opinions of the extremists of both right and left. Berlin says:

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<sup>132</sup> RT 305

<sup>133</sup> RT 307

This is enough in the first half of the century of what came to be known as the ‘superfluous man’,  
the hero of the new literature of protest...<sup>134</sup>

And because of his influence, the Russian government prevented him from entering the country for a period of time.

Turgenev was in the same position as Herzen and Tolstoy in that he preferred to stand aside from the extremists and their extreme activities and preferred merely to observe situations rather than participating with either of them. Berlin describes the main ideas of Turgenev as follows:

### *Liberty*

Turgenev admired Belinsky, a moralist who was committed to the unity of theory. Belinsky was the first and foremost seeker after liberty, justice and truth. Turgenev admired him so much that, whenever he felt discouraged in the fight for liberty, the spirit of Belinsky called him back to keep on fighting.

The most passionate and influential voice of his generation was that of the radical critic Vissarion Belinsky.<sup>135</sup>

Following Belinsky, and similarly to Herzen and Tolstoy, Turgenev’s first value was liberty.

James Bryce, who presented him, described him as a champion of freedom.<sup>136</sup>

And Turgenev himself claimed that he was a liberal.

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<sup>134</sup> RT, 303

<sup>135</sup> RT, 304

<sup>136</sup> RT, 306

I'm and have always been a 'gradualist', an old-fashioned *liberal* in the English dynastic sense...<sup>137</sup>

However he was a liberal in quite a different way from the Western ones. He was less confident in the value of freedom and he sometimes became critical or raised questions as to liberal values.

His major novels from the middle 1850s onwards are deeply concerned with the central social and political questions that *troubled the liberals* of his generation.<sup>138</sup>

To judge by his less confident and more critical attitude to the value of freedom, Turgenev's conception of freedom seems different from the general one – and it seems to be similar to Herzen's and Tolstoy's. That is, his conception of freedom seems to be the freedom acquired from the rejection of all doctrines, rationality and knowledge rather than a freedom based on them. That is, his freedom was the freedom from knowledge and rationality. This made him close to a nihilist. Turgenev says:

Aristocracy, liberalism, progress, principles [...] what a lot of foreign...and useless words. A Russian would not want them as a gift.<sup>139</sup>

Moreover, like Tolstoy, Turgenev had the perspective that in order to establish any new things, we must first destroy everything. That is, we must clear the ground before building up new things. This was the revolutionist idea which he seemed to receive from Bakunin. Turgenev says:

It is not our business [to build], first one must clear the ground [from his novel].<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> RT, 336

<sup>138</sup> RT, 307

<sup>139</sup> RT, 319

<sup>140</sup> RT, 317-318

The revolutionist idea seemed to support the conception of freedom mentioned above. That is for Turgenev freedom meant to be free from all existing knowledge and rationality.

*Open minded/empathy*

Turgenev was fair to all groups of the intelligentsia including the groups that he did not agree with. He tried to understand them all and feel empathy for them all.

Turgenev surpasses even Herzen in his dedication to understanding and empathy with different ideals and personalities, including those of the conservatives and the radicals whose views collide with his own.<sup>141</sup>

*No absolute truth/the rejection of all knowledge*

Turgenev was sceptical about everything. He did not believe in any absolute ideal, truth or final solution to problems. For him, problems were complex and insoluble. Apart from the absolute ideal and solution, he also rejected all doctrines, theories, philosophy and religions. He seemed to believe like Tolstoy that knowledge was equally dangerous as despotism.

...he could not rest comfortably in any doctrine or ideological system. All that was general, abstract, absolute repelled him.<sup>142</sup>

Every thesis must be weighted against its antithesis, that systems and absolutes of every kind – social and political no less than religion – were a form of dangerous idolatry...<sup>143</sup>

Turgenev also rejected Western ideas and knowledge. He believed that they could not fit in Russian society. For example, he says about socialism:

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<sup>141</sup> Crowder, 2004, 33

<sup>142</sup> RT, 308

<sup>143</sup> RT, 341

socialism is just as unreal and abstract as any other of the ‘isms’ imported from abroad<sup>144</sup>

And

Aristocracy, liberalism, progress, principles [...] what a lot of foreign and useless words. A Russian would not want them as a gift.<sup>145</sup>

### *Rejection of science and rationality*

The figure in Turgenev’s novel *Fathers and Children* who was called Bazarov had the character of a positivist who rejected everything that could not be proved by scientific and rational methods. For Bazarov, truth can be found only by observation and experiment. Other methods such as literature and philosophy were useless. Bazarov believed that we could not find any truths through them. Moreover, Bazarov believed that passion which was the core value in romanticism was ‘rubbish’.

Truth alone matters: what cannot be established by observation and experiment is useless or harmful ballast – ‘romantic rubbish’ – which an intelligent man will ruthlessly eliminate.<sup>146</sup>

Some readers infer from this novel that Turgenev was committed to science and rationality as the method to attain absolute truths. But later in the novel Bazarov falls in love and realises that sciences and rationality do not help him at all in his life but passion which he denied was more real (since it hurt him).

In the end, he is incurably wounded by a love, by a human passion that he suppresses and denies within himself, a crisis by which he is humiliated and humanised.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> RT, 319

<sup>145</sup> RT, 319

<sup>146</sup> RT, 317

<sup>147</sup> RT, 321

Therefore it was more likely that Turgenev did not agree with Bazarov's commitment to science and rationality. Turgenev in fact rejected them and showed his rejection through the failure of Bazarov. As Katkov says:

'It is as if the author didn't like him, felt lost before him and more than this was terrified of him'.<sup>148</sup>

And Berlin seems to know it as he says:

Bazarov and his friends will discover nothing; they are not researchers, they are mere ranters, men who declaim in the name of science which they do not trouble to master; in the end they are no better than the ignorant...<sup>149</sup>

Therefore, we can say that some of the intelligentsia was wrong in interpreting Turgenev as supporting science and rationality or as being a positivist while in fact he rejected them and showed this rejection in his novel.

### *Compromise and moderation*

Compromise and moderation are the characters which Berlin stresses the most in his writing on Turgenev. It is as if they are his most outstanding characteristics.

Like Herzen and Tolstoy, Turgenev rejected all actions that led to violence. He resisted all radical revolutions and suggested a slow progress to liberty instead. Crowder says:

He went on telling the radicals that they were mistaken [...] he said over and over again that he loathed revolution, violence, barbarism. He believed in slow progress made only by minorities, if only they do not destroy each other.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> RT, 322

<sup>149</sup> RT, 329

<sup>150</sup> RT, 337

As a result, he did not take sides with any of the extremists. He was a moderate; his position was somewhere between them. And he also held an intermediate position between the Tsar and the extremists. For his moderate position, he was criticised by both sides.

he enjoyed remaining in an intermediate position, he enjoyed almost too much his lack of will to believe...<sup>151</sup>

And

He tried to please everyone.<sup>152</sup>

And

...no one in the entire history of Russian literature, perhaps literature in general, has been so ferociously and continuously attacked both from the right and from the left as Turgenev.<sup>153</sup>

When he was criticised, he was upset. He could not tolerate the criticism. So he changed his opinions from time to time to please everyone. In fact, he never agreed with any of them since he had never agreed with the extreme views.

He did, no doubt, adopt a different tone in writing to different correspondents.<sup>154</sup>

And

He wished to march with the progressives, with the party of liberty and protest. But in the end, he could not bring himself to accept their brutal contempt for art, civilised behavior...<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> RT, 231

<sup>152</sup> RT, 331

<sup>153</sup> RT, 310

<sup>154</sup> RT, 333

<sup>155</sup> RT, 334

Berlin sometimes criticises Turgenev as well. For example, he says that Turgenev always wanted the young extremists to accept and respect him. So he sometimes wanted to fight against the Tsar together with them but he had lack of courage to do so. Also, he could not bring himself to accept their violent attitudes. Berlin says:

he knew that he was accused of lack of depth or seriousness or courage.<sup>156</sup>

In this case, Turgenev also experienced conflict in himself. On the one hand, he wanted to join the extremists especially the right wing while on the other hand he resisted them.

### *Sense of reality*

Turgenev also had a sense of reality as well. His sense of reality was more like Herzen's than Tolstoy's in that he valued real life over distant or abstract ideals. He did not support the sacrifice of life for ideals. And he did not believe in the absolute character or the certainty of anything, even of liberty. For him, values were relative to contexts or situations.

His vision remained delicate, sharp concrete and incurably realistic.<sup>157</sup>

To conclude, for Berlin, Turgenev was a very moderate person. He sometimes had problems both within himself and with others because of these characteristics. Regarding his position, it is quite clear from his own words that he was a liberal who had liberty as his first value. However, it seems that he was a liberal in a different way from the general definition of the term. That is, he was a liberal who often criticised the value of freedom for its failure to be an absolute truth. And he aimed instead at freedom as being away from distant ideals and rationality rather than freedom that is based on them. In this case, like

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<sup>156</sup> RT, 339

<sup>157</sup> RT, 308



Tolstoy, some people might read him as a nihilist due to his rejection of absolute truths and all knowledge, especially science and rationality.

According to Berlin's writings, Turgenev was committed to liberty, empathy, compromise and a sense of reality (with respect to the value of real life over ideals). And he rejected the existence of absolute truths and academic knowledge especially science and rationality. This showed that Turgenev's main ideas were very close to Herzen's and Tolstoy's. And some of them, such as the lack of absolute values, empathy and compromise, are close to Berlin's pluralism. We will take this information to analyse his real position, together with the positions of Herzen and Tolstoy, in the next chapter.

### **The opinions of Berlin's followers**

Berlin claims that the three thinkers are his 'heroes'. For example, in his writings, he refers to them as 'three moral preachers of genius'.<sup>158</sup> Whether or not Berlin believes them to be pluralists, he deeply admires them or their ideas.

Kelly claims that what Berlin admires in them is the fact that they did not join in with any of the extremists but were sensitive to both sides. Kelly says:

The Russian thinkers whom Berlin most admired were strangers to this kind of one-sidedness. He shows how, for historical reasons, they shared a pressing concern with the application of moral principles to concrete situations, which made them unusually sensitive to the competing claims of reason and feeling...<sup>159</sup>

As mentioned earlier, some of the main ideas of the three thinkers are close to pluralism. So Berlin's followers such as Kelly, Crowder and Confino interpret the three thinkers as pluralists. Kelly believes that Berlin writes Russian history as a sample to show the conflicting relationship between the monists (represented by the extremists of both sides) and the pluralists (represented by the three

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<sup>158</sup> Kelly, RT, 29

<sup>159</sup> Kelly, LIB, 9

thinkers) while he concludes in the narratives that the pluralists are superior to the monists. Kelly says:

...they give him a way of discussing hedgehogs and foxes that avoided the risk of reductiveness. [...] hence their value as a rich source of concrete examples for Berlin's discussion of the motives and consequences of monist and pluralist approaches to history and human life.<sup>160</sup>

Crowder believes that Berlin writes Russian history in order to express his own opinion in political philosophy. That is, Berlin wants to say that radical revolutions or any activities that could lead to violence are all unacceptable while a moderate attitude or peaceful revolutions such as those of the three thinkers should be encouraged.

It is there that he works out or confirms some of his most characteristic themes [...] the rejection of both reaction and revolution in favour of gradualism, and the idea that the liberal modes of caution, moderation and compromise should be seen not as weakness in politics but as strengths...<sup>161</sup>

Confino believes that Berlin describes himself or his own position through his descriptions of Herzen. That is, for Confino, Herzen's position is what Berlin wants people (or his readers) to understand in himself. Confino says:

One has the impression that very often in writing about Herzen, Berlin is speaking about himself, or at least indicating how he would like to be perceived by others.

And

Similar passages abound in Berlin's writings, and I wonder if in some of them, Sir Isaiah was providing food for the thought that he, perhaps unconsciously, was depicting himself'.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Kelly, LIB, 6-7

<sup>161</sup> Crowder, 2004, 34-35

<sup>162</sup> Confino, 'Isaiah Berlin, Alexander Herzen, and Russia's Elusive Counter-Enlightenment', Mali, J, & Wokler, R (ed) (2003). *Isaiah Berlin's Counter-Enlightenment*. Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society.185

Despite the above opinions from his followers, Berlin himself does not make it clear that he intends to present the three thinkers as pluralists or as his representatives. But if Kelly, Crowder and Condino are right; if Berlin intends to make them pluralists (or his representatives) and puts them on top of the ranking, this would make it look like Berlin tries to present pluralism as a universal theory or PUT through them.

However, Berlin does not make it clear so it might or might not be true. Perhaps, Kelly, Crowder and Confino misinterpret Berlin since they see some overlapping ideas between the three thinkers and Berlin's pluralism. The analysis of Berlin's actual view will be in the next chapter. So far, what is clear is only that Berlin admires the three thinkers (especially Herzen) deeply and ranks them as superior to all other groups of the intelligentsia.

### **Russian history by other historians – main focus: Gary Saul Morson**

The other historian who describes Russian history in the same period as Berlin (19<sup>th</sup> century), Gary Saul Morson, however interprets Russian history quite differently from Berlin. Among the differences, there are some similarities as well. For example, like Berlin, Morson believes that Russian writers such as Tolstoy and Turgenev rejected the existence of universal ideals and believed instead that all values are particular or subjective to contexts or situations.

The novel (of Chekhov) is above all a genre that deals with the particulars of experience, and so it became a tool directed at the abstractions of ideological thinking.<sup>163</sup>

Like Berlin, Morson also claims that these writers rejected any actions that could lead to violence and/or the sacrifice of people's life for ideals.

[for Herzen] Willing to sacrifice real people for the sake of a theoretical goal, the intelligent becomes the cruelest tyrant of all.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Morson, 1998, 154

<sup>164</sup> Morson, 1998, 155

However, there are some main differences between Morson and Berlin which are:

1) For Morson, the three thinkers (as well as some other writers with similar roles to them such as Chekhov, Bakhtin, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and so on) are merely *the novel writers and/or the sceptics* who are sceptical about the ideas of the intelligentsia but they themselves are not the intelligentsia. The intelligentsia and/or the Russian philosophers, for Morson, are the extremists of both sides who are committed to the universal ideals, philosophy and theories such as those of Hegel and Marx. And, for Morson, the three thinkers are not the heroes in Russian history. They are just the sceptics who are equal in their dignity to the intelligentsia. Morson says:

An intelligent was expected to adhere to a particular set of beliefs.<sup>165</sup>

If we put Morson's historical narrative **onto a chart**, it would be as follows:

[1 The superior rank] *the extreme left and right* [on-a-par] *the sceptic three thinkers*

[2 The lower rank] *the Russian empire, Tsar Nicolas I*

Apart from Morson, in addition, Russian people in general seem to believe in the opposite approach to Berlin's. That is, they believe that the extremists, especially the left, were heroes who attempted to rescue Russian people from the Tsar and proposed a new socialist theory which brought enlightenment to Russian people. Kelly says:

Berlin approach to Russian thought contrasts sharply with the dominant tendency in the 1950s and 1960s [...] Soviet historians exalted the pre-revolutionary radical intelligentsia as enlighteners and precursors of scientific socialism...<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Morson, 1998, 153

<sup>166</sup> Kelly, LIB, 9

2) While Berlin focuses on the three thinkers' political roles, Morson does not mention their political roles. He claims that their main roles were to present their *philosophy of life* (personal, non-political) through their novels. For example, Morson says that the three thinkers tried to show in their novels that real life is meaningless in the same way as life in the novels. It has a lack of purpose and it cannot be planned or plotted. Therefore, it always surprises us. Even the authors who write the novels (whom we can compare to the people who try to navigate their life) do not know where and how life will end. The authors such as Tolstoy and Turgenev claimed that instead of the big goals or the universal ideals, it is the small incidents or the small experiences that navigate life. Morson writes of Zosima, the figure in *The Brother Karamazov*:

Zosima explains that one does not have to know the consequences of good acts to believe in them, for each small act of good or evil shapes another small act in an endlessly complex concatenation of causes and influences beyond human view.<sup>167</sup>

Moreover, every part of life does not necessarily connect with one another nor is it necessarily consistent. They are often independent and sometimes conflicting with one another.

Tolstoy promised that he would write so that each part of the work would have 'an independent interest...which would consist not in the development of events but in development [itself].'<sup>168</sup>

There are no key events or key persons in real life. All are equally important to one another. This is different from the historical narratives in which the historians always invent the key events or key persons (i.e. heroes) in their narratives. Morson says:

His (Dostoyevsky) novels proceed by allowing for many possible stories, a sea of rumors and as in the *Devils*, the refusal to specify even the key events, what did actually happen.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Morson, 1998, 156

<sup>168</sup> Morson, 1998, 164

Overall, for Morson, the three thinkers (and some other writers) do not have political roles so much as concerns with the philosophy (of life) and history. This is quite different from Berlin's view.

3) Berlin focuses only on the three thinkers (classifying them as the leading group among the intelligentsia) while Morson does not select only these three. He mentions the works of *Tolstoy and Turgenev but also* Chekhov, Bakhtin, Fyodor Dostoyevsky (and some more) while mentioning very little of Herzen. It is as if Herzen were less significant in comparison with other Russian writers. This shows that Berlin's selection of heroes is his personal view rather than a general view.

4) While Berlin's reading of the three thinkers focuses mostly on their political ideas and this makes his followers such as Kelly, Crowder and Confino understand them as pluralists, Morson on the other hand *compares the three thinkers to the existentialists* rather than pluralists. He claims that the three thinkers' ideas are close to the existentialists.

[the intelligentsia] are closer to Edmund Burke than to Hegel. Among Western thinkers, some existentialists and especially Wittgenstein were closest in spirit to the Russian novelists they admired.<sup>170</sup>

There are other historians who also claim that the three thinkers are existentialists. For example, Davidson also claims Herzen as an existentialist by his emphasis on passion. He says:

[Herzen] could not see that being right depended on anything other than believing what one did with the utmost passion<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Morson, 1998, 166

<sup>170</sup> Morson, 1998, 151

<sup>171</sup> Davison, (Jun 1966) 'Herzen and Kierkegaard', *Slavic review*, Vol 25, No2, 208

He quotes Herzen:

‘does the mind need any other criterion than itself?’<sup>172</sup>

So he believes that Herzen was an existentialist.

There has not previously been sufficient emphasis on the existentialist nature of these ideas in Herzen. Although his place in the history of Russian political thought is secure enough, he deserves a place also in any account of existentialism.<sup>173</sup>

Lavrin claims that Tolstoy was like Nietzsche. He was an existentialist who relied on philosophy to cure his inner suffering from self-division. His self-division was that he wanted to believe in something (such as God) and he had a strong will to believe in it but at the same time he refused to believe in anything at all in order to have freedom of mind. His philosophy is used to cure this self-division. It was therefore more about psychology than politics. In other words, his philosophy is more about private issues rather than public issues.

Their [Tolstoy and Nietzsche’s] principles were important to them not in so far as they were ‘true’, but in so far as they proved an efficient means against their own self-division.<sup>174</sup>

Berlin however does not analyse Tolstoy as being similar to existentialists such as Nietzsche or analyse him in this psychological way but only in a political way. As to personal issues, he mentions only that Tolstoy became a Christian when he wanted to search for the truths in nature.

This shows how differently (from Berlin) the other historians read Russian history in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Morson’s reading is only an example to show that Berlin’s view of Russian history is quite personal. It is not the general view, firstly, to select the three thinkers to be on top of the ranking or to be the heroes

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<sup>172</sup> Davison, (Jun 1966) ‘Herzen and Kierkegaard’, *Slavic review*, Vol 25, No2, 208

<sup>173</sup> Davison, (Jun 1966) ‘Herzen and Kierkegaard’, *Slavic review*, Vol 25, No2, 209.

<sup>174</sup> Lavrin, (Jun 1925), ‘Tolstoy and Nietzsche’, *The Slavonic review*, Vol 4, No 10, 69

of the intelligentsia. For some historians, the three thinkers might not even be considered as the intelligentsia at all. Or, they might be existentialists who did not have any political roles at all. Finally, some of Berlin's selected thinkers such as Herzen might not have any significant roles (even in literature) in other historians' views. The interpretation of Russian history and the intelligentsia can vary.

### **The overall picture of Berlin's Russian history**

From all the above, the overall picture of Berlin's Russian history is that there are hierarchical rankings among the groups of intelligentsia and the supreme one is the moderate group represented by the three thinkers. Berlin interprets the three thinkers quite similarly to one another. That is, they are all committed to elements such as liberty, subjectivity or particularity of values, compromise, the sense of reality, the rejection of knowledge, doctrines and theories.

The other historians on the other hand interpret them quite differently. For example, they interpret them merely as writers or sceptics, not as among the intelligentsia and having significant roles in Russian politics. They rank them as equal to the extremists of the left and the right. Some historians classify them in the group of the existentialists (and/or the nihilists) who are more concerned with personal issues, passions and cultures than politics. The differences between Berlin's reading and other historians' readings mean that Berlin's reading is more of a personal view than a general view. This might be because he is personally interested in ethics or politics so he interprets them in an ethical or political way while the other historians interpret them more straightforwardly.

Or, it might be because Berlin selects only some of their main ideas that he personally admires to present in his writings, such as their rejection of a single universal ideal and their rejection of extreme beliefs that could lead to radical revolutions and violence. His selection of their main ideas which he presents in his writings portrays them as closer to pluralists. But does Berlin actually intend to present them as pluralists? It is not clear if he does intend that. And it is not necessary that he should intend that.



His followers such as Crowder and Confino claim that Berlin intends to explain his own position through these three thinkers. That is, he does not intend to explain the real them or the real incidents in Russia. History is merely the medium that he uses to explain himself instead of using himself (or his writings) as the medium for history to pass through the readers. And, if this is true, it means that Berlin presents the three thinkers as pluralists. And it means that he intends to present pluralism (through the three thinkers) as a universal theory or PUT.

To conclude, this chapter presents Berlin's interpretation of Russian history and the three thinkers – the way he reads and decodes them and how they appear different from their depiction by other historians. And if he means that the three thinkers are pluralists, pluralism (as on top of the ranking) would become a norm or PUT. But does he actually mean that? Do his descriptions of the three thinkers' ideas all correspond to his descriptions of pluralism? These questions will be clarified in the next chapter.

### **Chapter 3 Analysing the three thinkers**

This chapter will analyse the positions that Berlin gives to the three thinkers – Herzen, Turgenev and Tolstoy – whose philosophical ideas were discussed in the previous chapter. The analysis will be preformed by comparing Berlin's ideas of pluralism with his descriptions of the three thinkers. The result will turn out to be contrary to the claims made by Berlin's followers. That is, Berlin does not believe them to be pluralists, and he in fact holds them to be *liberals*. Although he admires them enough to position them beyond the other groups of the intelligentsia, his account is not intended to make them the representatives of pluralists or of himself.

The analysis will also show that Berlin seems to categorize the three thinkers in the *counter-enlightenment* group as being similar to Vico and Herder: figures that Berlin admires, but whose positions are not entirely commensurable with pluralism. Overall, this chapter will show that the three thinkers are '*counter-enlightenment liberals*' who are significantly distinct from Berlin's account of pluralists. And when Berlin does not present them as pluralists but as counter-enlightenment liberals, it means that Berlin does not intend to present pluralism as the norm or PUT in his Russian history.

#### **Analysing the three thinkers' position**

As we saw in the previous chapter, the works of Herzen, Tolstoy and Turgenev, according to Berlin, possess some different elements from one another, but nonetheless share similar core ideas. These similarities render it tenable to analyse their positions together with one another.

In order to do so, it is worthwhile to first recall the claims made by other historians, such as R.M. Davidson, who claim that the three thinkers are either similar to or in fact are existentialists. It is true that the three thinkers share some

common ground with the existentialists. For example, the latter<sup>175</sup> make claims as to the insufficiency of such forms of human knowledge as natural science, philosophy and morality, including rationality. The existentialists ask us instead to focus on the inwardness of human existence, such as intuition and passion, in order to judge the right or wrong of a specific situation. That is, they ask us to avoid the use of philosophical and or moral reasoning, and recommend that we rely instead on intuition and passion. Kierkegaard, for example, provides the conception of 'the single individual'<sup>176</sup> which asks us to reflect the true self by ignoring traditional philosophy. He says that to follow philosophy, such as morality and religions, or to follow the rule of 'what I ought to be' in order to have a meaningful life, is to sacrifice the true self; the results of such a sacrifice, he claims, are not worth the loss that it requires. The true self, for Kierkegaard, is within the inwardness and must come before any philosophical or moral knowledge. The 'single individual', he claims, is 'higher than the universal', and the 'subjective is the truth'.<sup>177</sup> If we now consider Herzen, Tolstoy and Turgenev, we can see that they also make claims as to the insufficiency of such forms of human knowledge as natural science and philosophy. Actually, they go so far as to reject all (intellectual) knowledge: Tolstoy, for example, claims (through Berlin's description) that 'men crave for truth by nature; therefore true education must be of such a kind that children and unsophisticated, ignorant people will absorb it readily and eagerly. But to understand this, and to discover how to apply this knowledge, the educated must put away their intellectual arrogance, and make a new beginning'.<sup>178</sup> The three thinkers also make claims as to the inwardness of human existence and the reflection of the self. It thus seems that the three thinkers share a number of ideas with the existentialists. However, Berlin does not describe their positions as existentialist in his writings. This is probably because his interest is more in ethics and politics, whilst

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Crowell, S, "Existentialism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2010 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/existentialism/>.

176

Ibid.

177

Ibid.

178

RT, 276.

existentialism is more of a cultural movement (around 1940s to 1950s) that was initially restricted to Sartre's philosophy alone. Although in later years the term was extended to include other philosophers as well, such as Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Albert Camus, it is still not an identifiable philosophical position. This might be the reason why Berlin does not make any claim to connect the three thinkers with existentialism.

Setting aside the existentialist position, Berlin seems to provide his readers with only two ways of interpreting the three thinkers: that is, they are either pluralists or liberals. In his writings, he sometimes calls them 'pluralists'; at others, he calls them 'liberals'. The positions that he gives them, in this case, are inconsistent. For example, Berlin sometimes describes Herzen as a liberal when pointing out that Herzen's final goal is liberty. He describes Herzen's position as follows: 'why is liberty valuable? Because it is an end in itself, because it is what it is'.<sup>179</sup> And Berlin sometimes says that Tolstoy is a pluralist (he uses the term 'fox') as he says: 'the hypothesis I wish to offer is that Tolstoy was by nature a fox, but believed in being a hedgehog'.<sup>180</sup> As regards Turgenev, he is, in Berlin's view, a liberal most of the time, since Berlin quotes Turgenev's words in his writings as follows: 'I am, and have always been, a 'gradualist', an old-fashioned liberal in the English dynastic sense...'.<sup>181</sup> However, throughout his descriptions of the three thinkers, Berlin inconsistently refers to them as 'pluralists' and 'liberals' substitutively. It seems that he invites his readers to adopt both ways of interpreting them, and that he casts both interpretations as being equally valid.

When looking closely at Berlin's descriptions of the three thinkers, however, we will see that although the three thinkers share some similar elements with pluralism (for example, they also believe that values are contextually dependent, and recommend the compromise between values), these similarities are not sufficient for us to classify them as pluralists. There are a number of differences between the three thinkers' main ideas and those of the pluralists, and these

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179 RT, 225.

180 RT, 26.

181 RT, 336.

differences are irreconcilable. The following section will attempt to make the differences more obvious. It will do so by contrasting the main ideas of pluralism with those of the three thinkers. The pluralist ideas will be presented first.

### *Berlin's explanation of pluralism*

Actually, the ideas of pluralism have been explained and discussed fully in chapter 1, but I will present some key points here as they can be contrasted with the positions taken by the three thinkers under discussion here. These points are a) the diversity of ultimate values; and b) the compromise between them.

a) *The diversity of ultimate values* – in pluralism, there must be at least two ultimate values (or a greater diversity of them) judged as ultimate by the different contextual rankings. Ultimate values can be either the neutral values judged as ultimate in different contexts, such as the two concepts of liberty, or they can be cultural values judged as ultimate in the different cultures.

These ultimate values are often incompatible with one another in the sense that we cannot reduce them, by ignoring their different roles in the different contexts, into the same group or category. Berlin says:

...two incompatible outlooks; [...] which differed, not in all respects – for they were all human, but in some profound irreconcilable ways, [were] not combinable in any final synthesis.<sup>182</sup>

Not only are they incompatible and irreconcilable, they are often incommensurable, in the sense that there is no universal criteria as agreed by all cultures to compare and judge one value as being better than another. Regarding their incommensurability, Berlin explains:

Each (society/culture) has its own gifts, values, modes of creation, incommensurable with one another: each must be understood in its own terms.<sup>183</sup>

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182 CTH, 10

183 CTH, 9

Since the ultimate values are incommensurable due to the lack of universal criteria, they can be judged only relatively in the different contexts. And although they are judged relatively as ultimate in the different contexts, Berlin seems to deem it sufficient that they are equally worthy of pursuit, or equally ultimate to one another. Berlin says:

We are urged to look upon life as affording a plurality of values, equally genuine, *equally ultimate*, above all equally objective; incapable, therefore, of being ordered in a timeless hierarchy, or judged in terms of some one absolute standard.<sup>184</sup>

There are three different ways to explain how it is possible for two values to be ‘equally ultimate’. One way is to say that the two values are equally ultimate *by their conceptions*. That is, the conceptions of values in themselves are equally ultimate to one another. For example, negative liberty and positive liberty are equally ultimate to one another by their conceptions. We cannot refer to any universal reasons to judge one as better than the other. The role of universal reasoning is limited in this case. Even if we are in the Original Position where all biased factors are excluded, we still cannot refer to any universal reasons to judge between them. Chang calls this ‘equally ultimate’ position between the two values as ‘on-a-par’. She explains that even if we put a small improvement in one, we still cannot make it better than the other. In this case, they are on-a-par.

If items are neither better nor worse than one another, and yet a small improvement in one does not make it better than the other, the items are on a par.<sup>185</sup>

Consider the two concepts of liberty: even if we increase a small amount in one, we still cannot make it better than the other. The same result would happen with the comparison between freedom and equality.

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184 CTH, 79

185 Chang, 1997, 26.

Another way to explain how two values can be equally ultimate is that they are equally ultimate *by their cultures*. That is, they are judged relatively as ultimate in their cultures. And even though we might be able, in some ways, to compare between them, we avoid doing so since we respect both cultures equally. That is, the cultures are what we respect and this prevents us from comparing the values belonging to them. And, by avoid comparing them on any ranking, we just grant them as equally ultimate to one another.

By Berlin's own explanation, he claims that values can be equally ultimate to one another *by mutual understanding*. That is, for Berlin, we all have the ability to 'enter into' the life of other people (by using imagination) and to thereby understand and feel empathy for them, no matter how different those lives are from our own. And when we can understand the life of another, we can also justify their values as being ultimate in the same way that they do. It follows from this that we can justify others' values as equally ultimate to our values. This process of understanding between people makes it possible for values that derive from different cultures to become 'equally ultimate' to one another. Berlin says:

...the way of life which, no matter how different from our own, normal men could find it natural to pursue, such ways of life as we, armed as we are, with *the capacity to perceive* the (objectively) good, beautiful and just, in all their guises and transformations, should not find it too strange to pursue in similar conditions, even if we do not ourselves accept them.<sup>186</sup>

It is clear from the above that for Berlin, the ultimate values, judged relatively as ultimate in the different contexts/cultures, can be approved as 'equally ultimate' to one another, without the need to refer to any universal ranking. And the reasons why he approves the equally ultimate status between them can be one of the three reasons mentioned above or all of them. As a result there are at least two (but up to a diversity) of ultimate values, judged relatively in the different contexts or cultures, but justified as equally ultimate to one another in pluralism.

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186 CTH, 84

However, he does not accept everything and adopts a relativist position. From the above quotation, Berlin does not only describe values as equally ‘ultimate’, but equally ‘objective’ as well. And this ‘objective’ status of values comes from the *objective part* in pluralism. That is, for Berlin, all justified values in pluralism, no matter how diverse and relative to contexts/cultures they are, must be within the scope of ‘**the human horizon**’. This human horizon, from Berlin’s claims, seems to consist of two necessary conditions: the first one is the moral ‘**central core**’; the second is the **psychological conditions**.

1) Berlin just plainly claims that there is a ‘central core’ of moral conception in which *all* human beings share, and contends that all justified values in pluralism must satisfy this conception. Berlin says:

There are, if not universal values, at any rate a minimum without which societies could scarcely survive.<sup>187</sup>

We might be able to understand Berlin’s central core by investigating the values that he excludes. They are, as Berlin seems to distress, extremism, violence, killing and war. Berlin says:

Few today would wish to defend *slavery or ritual murder or Nazi gas chambers or the torture of human beings* for the sake of pleasure or profit or even political good [...], or mindless killing.<sup>188</sup>

The quotations show that the values that belong to totalitarianism, despotism, Nazism, Cannibalism or other violent groups and cultures do not satisfy the central core conception, and as a result they are not justified by Berlin’s pluralism.

Therefore the central core or the minimum morality means, to put it simply, ‘non-violence’. Apart from the ‘non-violent’ elements, there seems to be no other

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187 CTH, 18

188 CTH, 18



values even freedom or equality that *all or most* people have accepted historically.

2) Values in pluralism are not only required to satisfy the moral core conception, but must in addition fall *within* the scope of human psychological conditions, and thus not beyond them. The psychological conditions that restrict the values in pluralism seem to consist of ‘imagination, understanding and empathy’. That is, the values in pluralism must be something that we can imagine, understand and feel empathy for. Berlin explains the latter as follows:

Both thinkers [Vico and Herder] advocate the use of the historical imagination, which can enable us to ‘descend to’ or ‘enter’ or ‘feel oneself into’ the mentality of remote societies; thereby we understand them...<sup>189</sup>

If we cannot do so, then these values will not be justified. In this case, the values such as the cultural ones which appear to be illusions or to be too fantastical, such as that of the Nazis or the Cannibals, would not be justified in pluralism.

We are called upon to exercise our imaginative powers to the utmost; but not to go beyond them; not to accept as authentic values anything that we cannot understand, imaginatively ‘enter’ into.<sup>190</sup>

Or Hardy explains them as the psychopath:

The psychopath or ‘pin-picker’ is the figure Berlin often used to illustrate what he meant by attitude and/or behaviour that would fall outside the human horizon.<sup>191</sup>

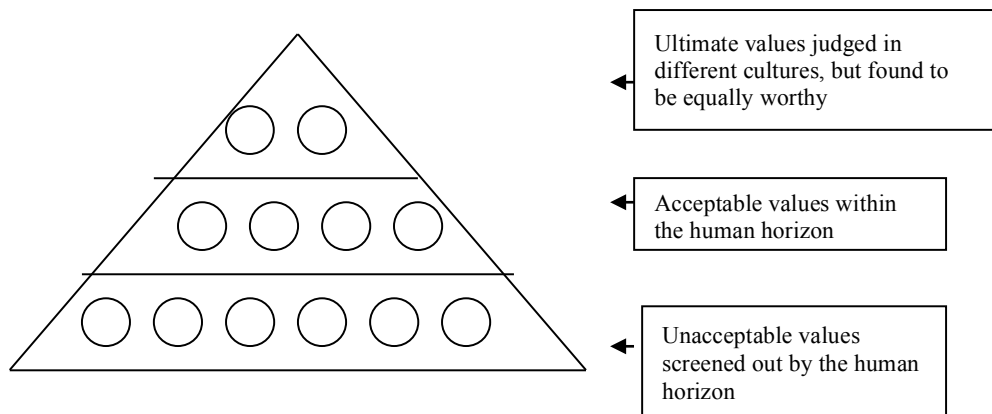
These two conditions help pluralists screen out the unacceptable values such as the extreme, violent values, and make the doctrine distinct from relativism as Berlin says:

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189 CTH, 82  
190 CTH, 84  
191 Hardy, OAM, 294.

Taking the two conditions (or the human horizon) into account, the diversity of ultimate values which are contextually or culturally relative must, as mentioned earlier, *satisfy* the central core of non violence, and must be *within* the scope of the psychological conditions of understanding and empathy. Put simply, those contextually and culturally relative values must satisfy the conditions of Berlin's *objective* human horizon. This is why Berlin says they are all 'objective'.

With this objective part, it means there is, to some extent, the use of a universal criteria (i.e. a reference to the human horizon) which results in some rankings of values within pluralism. That is, the universal criterion of the human horizon divides values into two levels: the 'acceptable values' (the ones which satisfy the moral and psychological conditions), and the 'unacceptable values' (the ones which do not satisfy them). Among the acceptable ones, some, if not all, are judged independently or relatively as 'ultimate' in the different cultures. All of them, Berlin claims, are equally worthy as one another. As a result, there is another ranking – that of ultimate values – beyond the acceptable values.



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192 Berlin's letter in Hardy's 'Appendix: Berlin's Universal Values – Core or Horizon?', OAM, 295

The implication of the explanations set out above is that there must be at least two ultimate values (but up to a diversity of them) on the 'ultimate' rank within pluralism.

2) *The compromise and sacrifice between ultimate values* – while there are at least two ultimate values in pluralism, usually conflicting with one another, it is necessary for pluralists to compromise between them. The compromise is that of moderating the conception of each ultimate value, so that they are able to exist together. For example, if we modify the definitions of liberty, equality and democracy, then we could locate them in parallel with one another.

However, if in some cases we cannot compromise and/or modify their conceptions – as would perhaps be the case if they were religious or sacred values, which require the adherents of this religion to preserve the conceptions as they are – then Berlin suggests that we should choose by referring to the situation at hand, and without appealing to the universal criteria (since it is absent at this stage). Berlin says:

The concrete situation is almost everything.<sup>193</sup>

Since Berlin encourages us to choose between the conflicting values, it is also alright if we promote one value over the other, since values are promoted here for the sake of resolving conflicts, and not with a view towards approving one value as being intrinsically better than the other.

Consider Berlin's claims that the ultimate values are 'equally ultimate' or 'equally objective' to one another, so that to choose and promote one value always results in the sacrifice and/or *the loss* of another equally worthy one. Berlin says:

Some among the great goods cannot live together. That is a conceptual truth. We are doomed to choose and every choice may entail an irreparable loss.<sup>194</sup>

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CTH, 15

In this case, if the values in pluralism are not ‘ultimate’ or ‘objective’, when pluralists choose or promote one over the other it would not generate a loss of the other. It would be only a trade-off between conflicting choices. But Berlin stresses the ‘ultimate’ or ‘objective’ status of values in pluralism (as justified by the human horizon), which means that there is as a result always a loss in pluralism.

The positions set out above are the main ideas in pluralism. They are presented here in order to contrast them with the ideas of the three thinkers, who will not be categorized as pluralists unless 1) they have the idea of a diversity of ultimate values which consists of at least two ultimate values that are incompatible, incommensurable but equally ultimate (or equally objective) to one another. If freedom is their ultimate value, there must be at least another ultimate value that is equally ultimate to freedom. In other words, the three thinkers must be committed to more than one ultimate value. And 2) they must have the idea of compromise and sacrifice between those ultimate values.

#### *Berlin on the three thinkers*

As mentioned in chapter 2, Berlin’s followers such as Kelly and Crowder believe that Berlin interprets the three thinkers as pluralists, and that he uses them to represent his own position and ideas. For example, Kelly says:

Herzen’s vision of the self and the world, based on a radical rejection of monistic systems, is so close to Berlin’s own outlook (he often referred to Herzen in conversation as ‘my hero’ that his exposition of Herzen’s thought provides answers to some of the most debated questions about his own pluralism.<sup>195</sup>

However, after investigating Berlin’s descriptions of the three thinkers more closely, it does not seem true that Berlin has that intention. His descriptions of

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194 CTH, 13

195 Kelly, LIB, 15

the three thinkers contain a number of ideas which are in contrast to his pluralist ideas.

Firstly, Berlin describes them in a way as to present as having only one ultimate value: freedom (of the will). For example, Berlin says that freedom is their ultimate political goal, and that all their political activities are conducted in order to achieve the goal. Berlin does not state in his works that the three thinkers are committed to any other ultimate values which might, in their view, be equally ultimate to freedom. It seems that they are not committed to a diversity of ultimate values but only to freedom. Herzen says (through Berlin's description):

The purpose of the struggle for liberty is not liberty tomorrow, it is liberty today, the liberty of living individuals with their own individual ends.<sup>196</sup>

And Tolstoy:

Tolstoy believed in individual liberty and in deed in progress too but in a queer sense of his own.<sup>197</sup>

For Turgenev, Berlin explains:

Jame Bryce, who presented him [Turgenev], described him as a champion of freedom. This delighted him.<sup>198</sup>

If we consider that Berlin stresses the diversity of ultimate values in pluralism and omits to present it as the idea of the three thinkers, it might be sufficient from this observation alone that the three thinkers are not pluralists. As mentioned earlier, Berlin leads his readers to only two possible interpretations of the three thinkers: pluralists or liberals. Their commitment to only one ultimate value and/or their lack of commitment to other ultimate values might be

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196 RT, 225

197 RT, 275

198 RT, 306

sufficient to undermine their position as pluralists, and we might be able to conclude right now that they are liberals. However, the ideas of the three thinkers such as their ranking of values, their conception of values in general and their reason for sacrificing freedom might require a bit more explanation.

1) *Freedom on top of the ranking* – as mentioned, the three thinkers seem to have only one ultimate value: freedom of the will. Herzen, for example, has been committed to freedom as his political and final goal. He conducted all the socialist activities such as the activities with The Bell and the peasant commune in order to achieve freedom for the people. Berlin says:

For men acted as they did each for the sake of his own personal ends. [...] It is for this reason that Herzen so seriously and passionately believed in the independence and freedom of individuals...<sup>199</sup>

The other two, Tolstoy and Turgenev, also have freedom as their only ultimate value. Therefore, if they were to rank values, freedom would be the only one at the top. Below freedom, they seem to put other incompatible values such as those of the radical left and right on the second rung, and those of the Russian government on the lowest rank below. For example, Berlin describes Herzen's view on Russian government (which is assumed to be the view of the other two thinkers as well) as follows:

For all his hatred of despotism, and in particular of the Russian regime...<sup>200</sup>

Russian government is therefore for the three thinkers on the lowest ranking. But as regards the radical left and right, the three thinkers seem to admire them to some extent, but prefer not to support them because of their extreme and/or violent ideas. Therefore, the three thinkers seem to put them on the second level: that is, above the Russian government, but below freedom of the will. Berlin describes Turgenev's view on the radicals:

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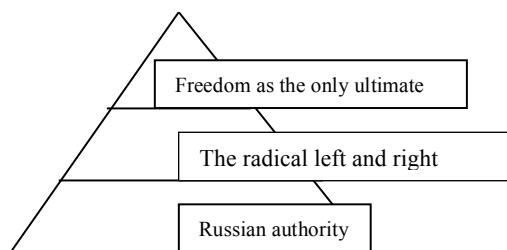
<sup>199</sup> RT, 128

<sup>200</sup> RT, 225

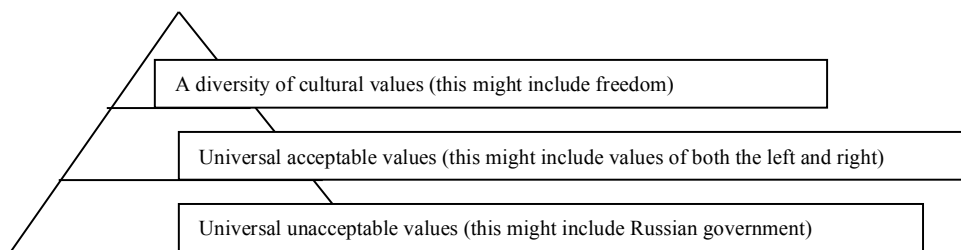
All his [Turgenev] life he wished to march with the progressives with the party of liberty and protest. But in the end he could not bring himself to accept their brutal contempt for art, civilized behaviour, for everything that he held dear in European culture.<sup>201</sup> [...] He went on telling the radicals [of both sides] that they were mistaken. [...] He said over and over again that he loathed revolution, violence, barbarism. He believed in slow progress, made only by minorities, if only they do not destroy each other.<sup>202</sup>

The ranking of the three thinkers in this case would appear different from that of Berlin's pluralism (especially on the top ranking): as follows:

The three thinkers' ranking



ranking of Berlin's pluralism



The two pictures show that there is only freedom as the ultimate value for the three thinkers while for Berlin there are a diversity of cultural values on top of the ranking (freedom might be one among them). Moreover, the ultimate value of the three thinkers (or freedom) *has not been justified by any universal criteria at all*; it is completely subjective, while the ultimate values of Berlin have been

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201 RT, 334

202 RT, 337

*justified by the human horizon* before reaching the ultimate ranking. The explanation for this will be presented in the following part of the chapter.

2) *The subjectivity of values including freedom*: the values for the three thinkers seem to lack a basis, as they are judged subjectively by their personal judgment and/or according to their will. The three thinkers do not believe in any theories, sciences or philosophical knowledge, so they do not justify their values based on any of them. Moreover, unlike Berlin, they do not believe in cultures, so they cannot make recourse to the latter as a foundation either. With nothing as a basis for justifying values apart from their own will, their values are *completely subjective*. In Berlin's explanation, the three thinkers explicitly reject the claims for values to be 'objective' or 'universal'. Berlin describes Turgenev's ideas:

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All that was general, abstract, absolute, repelled him...

The ultimate values in Berlin's pluralism, as described above, are *subjective* in the sense that they are judged as ultimate in the different contexts, and there is no requirement at this stage for the universal criteria. However, they are at the same time *objective* or universal in the sense that they are all within the scope of Berlin's human horizon; that is, they satisfy the moral requirement of non-violence and psychological conditions of understanding and empathy. The pluralist judgment of ultimate values therefore contains an objective or universal dimension that is different from the views of the three thinkers, insofar as the latter's work is based upon the merely subjective, and relies totally upon their personal judgment.

3) *Freedom as a subjective value can be sacrificed but this does not imply diversity*: the three thinkers claim that their ultimate value – freedom – can be sacrificed in necessary cases. For example, Herzen first claims (on Berlin's reading) that freedom is not absolute, and that not all people want to have freedom:



Men in general do not seek freedom, despite Rousseau's celebrated exclamation that they are born free, that remarks Herzen is, as if you were to say, 'fishes are born to fly, yet everywhere they swim'. Ichthyophiles may seek to prove that fish are 'by nature' made to fly; but they are not...

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Then Herzen says that freedom can be sacrificed in the necessary cases and/or for the survival of people:

...what they [people] need was food, shelter, clothing...

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And

His [Herzen's] central principle – that the goal of life is life itself, that to sacrifice the present [or life] to some vague and unpredictable future [such as for freedom] is a form of delusion....

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One might imply that if freedom can be sacrificed for other values, then the three thinkers might justify some other values as being equally ultimate to freedom; one could then argue that this could lead to the further implication that they have a conception of the diversity of values. However, Berlin's descriptions do not support this implication. In Berlin's writings, the three thinkers have never presented any values as being equal to freedom, and nor do they ever mention values that they believe to be worthy enough to sacrifice freedom for. If freedom can be sacrificed, but there is no justification and/or suggestion from them at all as regards equally worthy values, then this indicates rather that for the three thinkers, freedom can be sacrificed for ANY values, or rather for whatever values are necessitated by the case at hand.

The sacrifice of freedom for ANY values (without the justification of equally worthy values to freedom) could not imply the diversity of values in the three thinkers but only the subjectivity of value (that is of freedom).

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RT, 94

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RT, 237

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RT, 221

Considering Berlin's pluralism, there is the objective extent in which pluralists refer to the human horizon to justify values. So the diversity of ultimate values in pluralism, as all of which are justified by the human horizon, are all objective. When pluralists sacrifice one value, it must always be for the other equally ultimate and/or equally objective values (such as to sacrifice some freedom for equality, or to sacrifice some positive liberty for more negative liberty), not for ANY (unjustified) values, as would seem to be the case with the three thinkers. Since the three thinkers have only one subjective value which can be sacrificed in some necessary cases for any (unjustified) values, this alone cannot in anyway imply the diversity of values.

4) *Sacrifice to prevent violence* – the sacrifice of freedom for any values in the necessary cases by the three thinkers indicates that they have the idea of compromise, which probably makes them look similar to pluralists. However, it is likely that they would compromise or sacrifice their ultimate value – freedom – only for one reason, which is that of preserving life, and/or preventing forms of violence (that lead to the sacrifice of life) from occurring. As Berlin says, human life is the most valuable thing for Herzen:

The death of a single human being is no less absurd and unintelligible than the death of the entire human race...<sup>207</sup>

The three thinkers are realists (with the sense of reality) who reject all theoretical ideals. They believe that human life, no matter whose life, no matter how numerous, is more valuable than any ideals or values, including that of freedom. Freedom is not worth so much that it is justifiable to sacrifice life for it; in consequence, it is justifiable to sacrifice freedom for life.

Herzen declares that any attempt to explain human conduct in terms of or to dedicate human beings to the service of any abstraction, be it never so noble – justice, progress, nationality – even

if preached by impeccable altruists like Mazzini or Louis Blanc or Mill, always leads in the end to victimization and human sacrifice.<sup>208</sup>

And Berlin says:

Herzen understood his opponents (such as the radical left), and declined to compromise...<sup>209</sup>

As mentioned above, they say that freedom can be sacrificed in the necessary cases. The ‘necessary cases’ must therefore be the radical situations that involve the sacrifice of life for ideals, such as, for example, radical revolutions or wars that lead to violence and killing. The three thinkers would sacrifice freedom to preserve people’s life in these necessary cases. But apart from this, there does not seem to be any other motivation for the three thinkers to sacrifice freedom.

Consider Berlin’s pluralism: one of the main elements within it is compromising between incompatible ultimate values by sacrificing some for others. This pluralist sacrifice is different from that of the three thinkers in at least two points:

aa) The sacrifice of the ultimate values in pluralism is undertaken not only for the purposes of preserving life and/or preventing violence (although this is one of the main reasons for Berlin) but the sacrifice is always necessary for pluralists to *deal with conflicts* between the diversity of ultimate values. For example, when humility and pride or freedom and equality or negative and positive forms of freedom are in conflict, pluralists might not always be able to resolve them (e.g. compromise or balance between them). Often, they need to sacrifice one for the other. The sacrifice is therefore necessary in pluralism, regardless of whether the conflicts between values lead to violence or not.

bb) Considering that the ultimate values in pluralism are equally ultimate and equally objective within the scope of the human horizon, the sacrifice of some

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208 RT, 220

209 RT, 235

ultimate values is *tragic or a loss*. This loss would happen in pluralism all the time. Berlin says:

The world that we encounter in ordinary experience is one in which we are faced with choices between ends equally ultimate, and claims equally absolute, the realization of some of which must inevitably involve the sacrifice of others<sup>210</sup>

The sacrifice of freedom of the three thinkers, on the other hand, would not create a tragedy or loss since the value (including all other values of the three thinkers) is subjective and has not gone through any justification, such as that afforded by the human horizon, or even by cultural criteria.

The analysis of the three thinkers presented above leads to three conclusions: firstly, *the three thinkers are not pluralists* since their ideas, as Berlin describes, appear different from Berlin's pluralism. I) The three thinkers have freedom as their only ultimate value (on top of the ranking) while Berlin's pluralism requires a diversity of ultimate values that are equal to one another at the top of the ranking. II) The three thinkers' ultimate value – freedom – is subjective, whilst the ultimate values in pluralism are to some extent objective, insofar as they are all justified by the human horizon. III) The three thinkers claim that their ultimate value such as freedom can be sacrificed in some necessary cases but do not justify any other values to be chosen instead of freedom. They are in this case committed only to the subjectivity of value, and not to the diversity of values. Berlin, on the other hand, justifies the diversity of values by the human horizon, so they are to some extent objective. And when it is necessary to sacrifice one value, it must always be so for the other objective values. They would not sacrifice freedom for ANY values. Berlin is, therefore, committed *not* to the subjectivity of values, but rather to the diversity of objective values. IV) The three thinkers allow the sacrifice of freedom only for the preservation of people's life; Berlin however claims that the sacrifice of some ultimate values is necessary for resolving the conflicts between them. In other words, the sacrifice is a normal practice, in that it is required as a means of resolving conflicts in pluralism. It is

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FEL, 213-214

necessary whether or not the conflicts would lead to violence. With all these differences, the three thinkers are not pluralists and/or the representatives of Berlin as some scholars believe them to be.

Of the differences set out here, the most important one is that the three thinkers have liberty as their only ultimate value. This leads to the second conclusion, which is that *the three thinkers are liberals*. However, it is quite clear that they are not liberals in the same sense as Mill or Rawls, given their claims on the subjectivity of value and their rejection of all metaphysical foundations, such as that of theoretical and philosophical knowledge. These indications seem to correspond with the counter-enlightenment, such as the romantics, who also have the same ideas. Considering that the three thinkers are liberals who share the main ideas with the counter-enlightenment, this leads to the third conclusion: *their actual position is that of counter-enlightenment liberals*. This position of the three thinkers will be investigated further in the next section.

#### *The three thinkers as counter-enlightenment liberals*

Before saying that the three thinkers are counter-enlightenment liberals, we should first ask quite what the counter-enlightenment position actually is. It seems that the ideas of the counter-enlightenment extend far and wide from the mid eighteenth century to the present, yet all of them share the same objective: namely, that of rejecting the enlightenment's central cores, such as the permanent universal laws, natural science and reasoning, the universality of human nature, progress towards perfection, absolute permanent truth, and the one harmonious ideal world. The counter-enlightenment thinkers, by contrast, believe in what they see in reality, such as the particularity of truths and values, intuition or instinct, and the imperfections, negative aspects, conflicts and sufferings of human beings. Apart from these central core concerns, counter-enlightenment thinkers extend their thoughts further and wider, leading to a variety of positions. As Garrard puts it:

counter-enlightenment thought extends far and wide [...] it comes from all points of the ideological compass, from conservative Catholics and German romantics to liberals, neo-Marxists, feminists, environmentalists and postmodernists'.<sup>211</sup>

There are different levels between them as well. Some counter-enlightenment thinkers are *extreme*, such as those who reject all of the enlightenment ideas (for example, Berlin describes the young French romantics as performing a 'revolution against everything',<sup>212</sup>) while others are *moderate*, such as those who accept rational foundations but reject other elements. Crowder says:

the notion of a unitary counter-enlightenment [as described by Berlin] has been criticized for not distinguishing between mere 'critics' and outright 'enemies' of the enlightenment, the former accepting the basic framework of rational inquiry, the latter rejecting it'.<sup>213</sup>

For the three thinkers, they also share the central cores of the counter-enlightenment. For example, they also reject the permanent universal laws. Herzen says (through Berlin's description):

There are no timetables, no cosmic patterns: there is only the 'fire of life', passion, will, improvisation...<sup>214</sup>

And for Tolstoy, Berlin says:

Tolstoy declares that he cannot admit even small exceptions to the universal law.<sup>215</sup>

They also reject the optimism of human nature, the natural science and reasoning, the absolute permanent truth, the progress towards perfection, and the one harmonious ideal world. For example, Tolstoy claims (through Berlin):

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211 Garrard, OAM, 151

212 Berlin, ROR, 15

213 Crowder, 2004, 103

214 RT, 222

215 RT, 49

The Russian are...against liberal optimism concerning human goodness, human reason, and the value or inevitability of material progress: both furiously denounce the notion that mankind can be made eternally happy and virtuous by rational and scientific means.<sup>216</sup>

And

Both [Maistre and Tolstoy] preserve the same sardonic, almost cynical, disbelief in the improvement of society by rational means, by the enactment of good laws or the propagation of scientific knowledge...<sup>217</sup>

In the same way as the counter-enlightenment thinkers, such as the German Romantics Vico and Herder, whom Berlin deeply admires, the three thinkers are realists who believe in what they see in reality; especially the particularity of truths and values and the imperfections of human nature.

Considering the level of their disagreement with the enlightenment, the three thinkers seem to be more ‘enemies’ than mere ‘critics’, since they do not only reject natural science and reasoning (which are the basis of the enlightenment) but reject the whole intellectual knowledge. Because of this, the values in the views of the three thinkers lack a basis, and become a – as argued above – completely subjective. Tolstoy, for example, suggests that we should throw away the sciences, reasoning and all intellectual knowledge since they would make our mind unfree, and consequently prevent us from reaching the true knowledge which is in nature. Berlin describes Tolstoy’s idea as follows:

...to plan, organized, rely on science, try to create rational patterns of life in accordance with rational theories, is to swim against the stream of nature, to close one’s eyes to the saving truth within us...<sup>218</sup>

For Tolstoy, we should be free from knowledge and return to our pure mind, which is to rely on intuition and/or pure perception. Only in this way, he says,

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216 RT, 71

217 RT, 76

218 RT, 288

can we acquire true knowledge. Berlin thus describes Tolstoy's view with the following:

...the answer is about us everywhere, like the light of day, if only we would not close our eyes or look everywhere but at what is there, staring us in the face, the clear, simple, irresistible truth.<sup>219</sup>

The three thinkers seem to apply their rejection of knowledge (especially sciences and reasoning) to their conception of freedom. So their freedom is to throw away knowledge and acquire the truth from pure intuition or instinct (like children do). In other words, their freedom is freedom from knowledge and/or its foundations. This conception of freedom is expressed through Bazarov: the central figure in Turgenev's novel *Father and Children*. Berlin thus writes:

Bazarov is in revolt; he is the prisoner of no theory; that is his attractive strength; that is what makes for progress and freedom.<sup>220</sup>

This kind of freedom is parallel with the idea of many counter-enlightenment thinkers, such as the romantics Vico and Herder, and it might also be parallel with the idea of the nihilists for whom all knowledge should be rejected.

These views are however in contrast to those of the enlightenment liberals who base their freedom on scientific and/or rational method, such as the practical reasons achieved objectively in the constructive procedure. Freeman explains this procedure as follows:

Constructivism says that the correctness of moral judgment depends on their basis in principles that are the product of an objective procedure of construction that embodies all the requirements of practical reasoning.<sup>221</sup>

However, considering the three thinkers' opinions, if we have interpreted them correctly, then they would believe that the liberal constructive procedure which is

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219 RT, 283

220 RT, 324

221 Freeman, 2007, 352



established by liberal experts or intellectuals (or, in this case, by Kant or Rawls) to be the only procedure towards the universal truth (and/or Rawls later claims towards universal reasoning<sup>222</sup>) possibly leads to despotism. This can be interpreted from their views on the despotism of all knowledge. For example, Tolstoy, according to Berlin, says:

But what is the basis of 'liberal education' in schools and universities, staffed by men who do not even claim to be sure that what they teach is true? [...] the only lesson that history teaches us is that all previous educational systems have proved to be despotisms founded on falsehoods, and later roundly condemned.<sup>223</sup>

In their views, perhaps the enlightenment liberals, through their constructive procedure (e.g. hypothetical situation), could force people to accept the conception of freedom by claiming that their procedure is the only procedure towards the truth or towards universal moral reasoning.

The three thinkers, by asking to be free from all knowledge, seem to believe that their conception of freedom is more precise than the enlightenment one. Garrard claims that the counter-enlightenment thinkers (he might or might not include the three thinkers within this) appear to be more liberal than the enlightenment liberals who attach their conception of freedom and their procedure to only one universal form. Garrard says:

...so many of the thinkers of the pluralistic counter-enlightenment inadvertently promoted liberal ends...<sup>224</sup>

The three thinkers perhaps are, in Garrard's view, the liberals who are more liberal than the enlightenment liberals. In this case, their freedom from knowledge is not only in contrast to that of the enlightenment liberals: it also rejects the enlightenment liberals' foundational principle of (practical) reason.

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222 Freeman (2007, 356) says '...in order to remain non-controversial or neutral among different philosophical doctrines, Rawls refrains from contending that political principles of justice are true'.

223 RT, 295

224 Garrard, OAM, 143

When we combine the elements of the three thinkers' counter-enlightenment views (such as their rejection of the permanent universal law and the objective truths) into their conception of a freedom that rejects the enlightenment's basis, we can be assured that their positions are those of counter-enlightenment liberals.

While we can see that the three thinkers are the counter-enlightenment liberals who are the enemies of the enlightenment ones, such as Mill or Rawls, it is interesting to know Berlin's conception of freedom. Does it collapse into an enlightenment position, or into a counter-enlightenment view of freedom?

Berlin seems to agree with the three thinkers and with the counter-enlightenment thinkers in many respects, especially as regards the rejection of knowledge, natural sciences and reasoning. Berlin says:

These models [absolute knowledge and universal intelligible reason] invariably begin by liberating people from error. [...] But they almost invariably end by enslaving those very same people. [...] They begin as liberators and end in some sort of despotism.<sup>225</sup>

However, his conception of freedom is not similar to the three thinkers. For Berlin, freedom is a contextual and cultural value which belongs to liberal contexts and cultures, just like humility belongs to the Christians and pride belongs to the Republicans. While freedom is a cultural value that belongs to the liberals, it is equally worthy or equally ultimate to some illiberal values (that are within the scope of the human horizon) such as the moral restrictions and/or the rules of some cultures. As Garrard says:

Both political conclusions – liberal and illiberal – are logically compatible with pluralist assumptions...<sup>226</sup>

In fact, Berlin's conception of positive liberty is closer to an illiberal position, and has been frequently claimed as such. As Garrard says:

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Berlin, ROR, 3

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Garrard, OAM, 155

Positive liberty rests on assumptions that have historically proved to be extremely tempting to well-meaning despots who have sought to 'liberate' humans through force.<sup>227</sup>

And Berlin justifies this notion of positive freedom (if the form it takes is not too extreme, and falls within the scope of the human horizon) in his work on the two concepts of liberty, claiming it to be on a par with the negative freedom of the liberals. With all values cast as contextual and cultural values, Berlin asks us to use the practical method of the 'inside view' (or imagination, which Berlin claims we all possess) to enter into the different cultures, to understand the worthiness of their values, and to judge them as equivalent to one another. Therefore, freedom for Berlin is not freedom from knowledge (and/or the freedom of an empty mind), as is the case with the three thinkers, and nor is it the freedom achieved objectively from practical reasons, as in Rawls; instead, it is freedom achieved from the inside view into the liberal culture.

Since Berlin rejects scientific and rational methods, it is consistent that his basis for freedom is culture. Cultures can be known merely by practical method: this includes the psychological inside view that he suggests and the historical method (such as to see how worthy the value of freedom was for people in the different cultures in the past) that he often uses in order to justify his claims.<sup>228</sup> Since Berlin does not appeal to the objective method, as do the enlightenment liberals (he in fact rejects it), his conception of freedom cannot in anyway be similar to the enlightenment one.

So far, it has been shown that the three thinkers are counter-enlightenment liberals who define freedom as freedom from knowledge (and reasoning). They are the enemies of the enlightenment liberals, who base their freedom on universal reasoning. Berlin – a pluralist who sees freedom as a contextual and

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Garrard, OAM, 144

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For example, Berlin claims in his study of the romantic movement: 'the only sane and sensible way of approaching it, at least the only way that I have ever found to be at all helpful, is by slow and patient historical method'. (Berlin, ROR, 20)

cultural value – seems to be different from both. Is he an enlightenment thinker or a counter-enlightenment one?

*Berlin's pluralism as partly enlightenment and partly counter-enlightenment*

The answer is that Berlin is a half-blood (or eclectic). He shares some elements with the counter-enlightenment position, and yet also shares other elements with the enlightenment one. As a result of this mixed character, there are two different opinions on his work. Some scholars such as Robert Wokler, Steven Lukes, Claude Galipeau, Michael Rosen and Roger Hausheer believe that he is one of the enlightenment thinkers; others, such as Mark Lilla, John Gray and Richard Rorty, believe the opposite. For example, Wokler says:

...by far his most substantial essays on eighteenth and nineteenth century thought display his deep affinities to enlightenment thinkers and his emulation of their style...<sup>229</sup>

On the other hand, John Gray says:

The idea that animates all of Berlin's work [...] is one which, if true, as I take it to be, strikes a deathblow to the central classical Western tradition – and it must be added, to the project of the enlightenment.<sup>230</sup>

In fact, despite his own claim that 'I am on their [the enlightenment] side',<sup>231</sup> Berlin's pluralism shares elements with both sides. With the counter-enlightenment, and thus with the three thinkers, he shares, firstly, the rejection of metaphysics, sciences and reasoning. In fact, Berlin does not reject these methods in other subjects per se, but rather only when they are to be applied in the social sciences. For example, he rejects logic and mathematics if they are to be grounds for a priori positions in ethics and politics. Berlin asks:

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229 Garrard, OAM, 141

230 Garrard, OAM, 141

231 Garrard, OAM, 141

Why should not the same methods [used by Galileo, Newton and the work of other mathematicians and physicists and biologists] be applied to human matters, to morals, to politics, to the organization of society, with equal success?<sup>232</sup>

His real targets are however *natural sciences and reasoning*, which Berlin completely rejects as viable methods for judging or choosing ethical and political values (this should include Rawls's liberalism). One reason for this is probably that Berlin believes that *the subjective natures* of human beings, such as personal identities, commitments and cultures are important elements that should be taken into account when we judge the values of others, and also when we choose values for ourselves. That is, when we judge the values of others, Berlin says we need to know their subjective natures, such as their identities, commitments and cultures; if we do so, we can know if we will understand and feel empathy for them. If we can know this, we would then be able to justify their values as being on-a-par with our own values. In this way, Berlin says, we can justify the values of different cultures as being equally ultimate to one another. Moreover, when we choose values for ourselves, we need to know our own subjective natures so that we can choose values that accord with our natures. To exclude these subjective natures (both of ourselves and others), and to use only objective reasoning as in liberalism, would prevent us from understanding and feeling empathy for others (e.g. other cultures). It would also make us unable to choose the right values for ourselves (e.g. the right values for our cultures). Berlin says:

The ways in which men live, think, feel, speak to one another, the clothes they wear, the songs they sing, the gods they worship, the food they eat, the assumptions, customs, habits which are intrinsic to them...each of which has its own lifestyle.<sup>233</sup>

In other words, Berlin does not agree with scientific methods and reasoning because he believes that the subjective natures (and/or the relation between the persons and values) are necessary for making judgments and choices in ethics and politics.

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232 CTH, 33

233 CTH, 10

He also believes that the answer in ethics/politics is not like that in mathematics, logic or the sciences, in which there can be only one necessary answer. In ethics and politics, on the other hand, there can be more than one answer: for example, the right answer for one culture can be different to that of another. With the diversity of answers in ethics and politics, to allege that someone – an intellectual or an expert, perhaps – knows the only true answer (or the way to achieve it), no matter how reasonable or good it is, could lead to despotism. This position corresponds to the views of the three thinkers' view. Berlin says:

They [the enlightenment monist] begin as liberators and end in some sort of despotism. <sup>234</sup>

Secondly, as a result of his rejection of sciences and reasoning, Berlin shares with the counter-enlightenment thinkers and the three thinkers the rejection of *the universality of values* that results from scientific and rational methods (which excludes the subjective natures of human beings from consideration).

Overall, it can be said that because Berlin rejects metaphysical knowledge, he certainly rejects a priori truth. But apart from that, he also rejects the non-priori truth that results from scientific and rational methods. Therefore, he would reject the liberal values that result from the constructive procedure as well.

Thirdly, and in contrast to the above, instead of the scientific and rational method he shares with counter-enlightenment writers such as Vico and Herder (but not the three thinkers) the '*inside view*', which is, as explained above, a practical means of acquiring knowledge about human beings by entering into other people's lives. As Crowder says, Vico and Herder also use this method:

For Vico [...] the way to understand such men and their worlds is by trying to enter their minds, by finding out what they are at, by learning the rules and significance of their methods of expression... <sup>235</sup>

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234 Berlin, ROR, 3

235 Crowder, 2004, 99

The inside view of the counter-enlightenment is certainly different from the objective scientific and rational methods of the enlightenment, since the person who operates it takes into account the subjective aspects of human natures when they enter into the lives of others, such as their personal identities, commitments and cultures (he does not forget them as in the O.P), and justifies values based on these natures. This method does not rule out all kinds of reasoning. There might be the use of historical or cultural reasoning, but it does rule out the enlightenment's objective reasoning.

Fourthly, as a result of the inside view, Berlin believes we can understand the worthiness of others' values (based on their cultures) and justify them as equally worthy to our own values (albeit in different ways). This connects Berlin to another element of the counter-enlightenment thinkers: *the particularity of values*. This element is shared by Vico and Herder, as Crowder says:

Particularism of another kind is the central theme of the last of Berlin's counter-enlightenment masters, Hamann's disciple Johann Gottfried Herder. Like Vico and Hamann, Herder rejects what he sees as the scientism and heavy-handed moral universalism of the enlightenment, and celebrates the variety of human experience.<sup>236</sup>

The four counter-enlightenment elements noted above are the main ones that Berlin stresses in pluralism. There are some further counter-enlightenment elements as well. For example, Berlin also rejects the idea of *utopia* in the same way as the romantics.<sup>237</sup> This rejection of utopia actually follows from his rejection of a priori truth and of the assumption that there can be one final answer; he instead believes in a diversity of them. The diversity of values from the different cultures implies that there will always be conflicts between them, and that there is no chance for a perfect and harmonious society as in the utopia. Moreover, he seems to admit that he is *a realist* in the same vein as that of the three thinkers. The ideas that reflect his realist position are, for example, his

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<sup>236</sup> Crowder, 2004, 102

<sup>237</sup> CTH, 44

rejection of a priori truth and of the ideal, his views on the uncertainty of all values and truths, and his belief in the moderation (or compromise) of all values and actions including those for freedom. All are the ideas of the realists. Crowder says:

...Berlin has in mind when he calls for moderation, but he makes the same point in relation to liberal policies too.<sup>238</sup>

The last element of the work of the counter-enlightenment thinkers that Berlin shares with them is a commitment to *cultures*. This is similar to Vico and Herder, but not to the three thinkers. Garrard says:

Berlin's sensitivity to cultural diversity and his Herderian belief in the importance of language to the formation of identity have led him to sympathize with some of the communitarian and nationalist critics of both enlightenment cosmopolitanism and liberalism.<sup>239</sup>

His commitment to cultures leads him to the acceptance of some illiberal cultural values. This is parallel with some counter-enlightenment thinkers, such as Joseph de Maistre, who claim to accept illiberal values as well.

Considering Berlin's counter-enlightenment elements, especially 1-4, they seem to support the subjective part of pluralism, i.e. the diversity of values. That is, because he rejects the objective scientific and rational methods and the universal values that arise out of them, and because he refers instead to the practical method of the inside view as a means of justifying cultural values as being equally ultimate to one another, he has *grounds for his idea of the diversity of values*. It can be said that his thought's counter-enlightenment elements are the grounds for his diversity of values, which is the core idea in pluralism.

Given the counter-enlightenment elements discussed above, it might look as if Berlin is himself a counter-enlightenment thinker (as some scholars believe him

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238 Crowder, 2004, 173

239 Garrard, OAM, 155



to be). However one of the elements in Berlin's pluralism prevents him from collapsing into the counter-enlightenment group. It is the idea that the human horizon is *universal*. Although Berlin rejects the metaphysical, scientific and rational methods and also the universal values that arise out of them, he does not reject all conceptions of universality, and especially not the universality of human natures. As mentioned, he believes firstly that all human beings deny violence, and secondly that they all have the ability to understand and feel empathy for others. Berlin believes that these are characteristics that all people share at all times (although the level of these conditions might vary from one period to another). For example, he says:

[People] can always if they are sufficiently imaginative and try hard enough contrive to understand – that is, see to be intelligible ends of life for human beings situated as these men were.<sup>240</sup>

Another universal human nature in Berlin's view might be the need for belonging (or the importance of cultures), which Berlin also believes to be shared by all. Crowder writes:

A sense of belonging, of feeling at home in your surroundings among people who understand you, is for Berlin a basic good for all human beings.<sup>241</sup>

It should be noted that Berlin does not justify the universality of human nature by referring to any metaphysical knowledge or particular foundations (as does the enlightenment), but by referring to his historical cultural and psychological *observations* (as does the counter-enlightenment). The metaphysical knowledge and foundations of the enlightenment are not the tools that Berlin uses to justify any of his claims. Gray comments on Berlin's method of observation to justify the universal human nature as follows:

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240 CTH, 79

241 Crowder, 2004, 183

Berlin's references to the common human horizon would be understood, not as claims about generically human modes of thought and practice [as a priori anthropology], but instead as claims about *resemblances* within a very large and extended family of cultural forms.<sup>242</sup>

The universality of human natures seems to be one of the enlightenment ideas. For example, Berlin says:

The central doctrines of the progressive French thinkers, whatever their disagreement among themselves, rested on the belief [...] that human nature was fundamentally the same in all times.<sup>243</sup>

And it is this idea that the counter-enlightenment thinkers strongly disagree with. For example, Edmund Burkes claims that the nature of human beings is diverse: Berlin says:

There is for Burke no such thing as a universal human nature.<sup>244</sup>

Berlin seems to say that he rejects the assumption that there is indeed such a thing as a universal human nature. However, what he rejects is merely the universal human nature which derives from the metaphysical methods, and not the one that derives from observations. This is implied by his conception of the human horizon, which is also a universal one, but which derives from historical and cultural observations (i.e. the resemblances between people of different cultures).

Therefore, it can be said that although the method that Berlin uses to justify the universality of human nature (the observations) is not that employed by the enlightenment, the notion of universality that he derives from it does nonetheless correspond to an enlightenment position.

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242      Gray, *Berlin*, 163

243      Garrard, OAM, 152

244      Garrard, OAM, 152

The universal human nature that is consistent with the enlightenment idea is the *ground for the objective part* (or the judgment of values) in pluralism. This is because Berlin refers to the human horizon to justify values (i.e. he accepts only values that are within the scope of the human horizon) and limits the number of values in pluralism.

For the reasons set out above, it can be concluded that Berlin is a half-blood (or eclectic), and that he stands between the two sides. The subjective part of pluralism is shared with the counter-enlightenment, while its objective part is shared with the enlightenment. Berlin has never been fully aligned to either faction. Although most scholars disagree with one another on Berlin's exact position, some notice this half-blood character. For example, Kelly says:

I emphasize the importance of Berlin's remark at the end of his essay 'the Pursuit of the Ideal' that whether we like it or not, we are now heirs to two traditions.<sup>245</sup>

She might take it from Berlin's own claims, for as he himself once said:

We are children of both worlds.<sup>246</sup>

As an eclectic, Berlin's opinions on the two sides are probably that the counter-enlightenment ideas – such as the rejection of scientific and rational methods, the support of the inside view and the particularity of values – might result in the lack of any judgment of values whatsoever. That is, all values will always be justified. With this subjective character, it seems that the counter-enlightenment *do not see the conflicts* of values despite the fact that they always exist. Or, they might say that the conflicts are not real, when they in fact are indeed real.

On the other hand, the moral judgment of the enlightenment is too deeply attached to its objective methods (and to its concern with a final truth); as a result, it is *blinded to conflicts of* values. Exponents of enlightenment positions

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245 Kelly, LIB, 63

246 ROR, 141

believe that if people were able to reach the truth or the correct answer through using the objective method of reasonably deciding between values, then there would no longer be conflicts of values anymore. However, in reality, not all people agree with the procedure of attaining truth through objective reasoning. In consequence, the conflicts always remain. Berlin is located on a middle path between the two sides. He believes that values are particular and subject to contexts and cultures (as the counter-enlightenment), yet he also encompasses these values within the scope of a universal restriction (derived from the human horizon) into which they all fall (as in the enlightenment). And, amongst the particular values that he permits, he *sees the conflicts between them as real and unavoidable*. He suggests that these conflicts should be resolved on a case by case basis.

**To conclude the analysis:** the analysis of the three thinkers undertaken here has been performed solely upon the basis of Berlin's own descriptions. It proves that the three thinkers are liberals, since they have freedom as their only ultimate value. And they are counter-enlightenment thinkers, since their freedom has counter-enlightenment characteristics. These ideas and positions, when compared to Berlin's pluralism, are significantly different. Berlin as a pluralist does not take freedom to be the only ultimate value, but allows a diversity of values, including illiberal ones. His pluralism appears to be half informed by the counter-enlightenment, and half by the enlightenment; it is thus not completely aligned with the counter-enlightenment, as are the three thinkers. These differences between Berlin and the three thinkers serve to clarify that Berlin does not intend to interpret them as pluralists. Instead, he describes them as counter-enlightenment liberals. The analysis of Berlin's followers, who claim that three thinkers are pluralists, or that Berlin explains his pluralist position through these thinkers, is therefore false.

**To conclude the chapter,** the first piece of Berlin's writing on Russian history which seems to present the three thinkers as pluralists is however proved in this chapter that they are more akin to *the counter-enlightenment liberals* whose main ideas and elements are different from pluralism. When they are not pluralists, it means that Berlin does not use his Russian history to present pluralism as the

norm or PUT. But he seems merely to present his admiration for the three thinkers or for the counter-enlightenment ideas, some of which he shares in pluralism. According to his deep admiration for the three thinkers, it is possible that Berlin might rank the counter-enlightenment ideas as equally worthy to pluralism.

## Chapter 4: Pluralism and traditional liberalism

The second piece of Berlin's writing is on moral and political philosophy, and is mainly focused on his idea of pluralism. In this piece of writing, many scholars believe that Berlin **connects his pluralism with (the enlightenment or) traditional liberalism**. So they believe he is stating that pluralism is part of, or another version of, traditional liberalism. Crowder (one of Berlin's followers), for example, claims that Berlin connects his pluralism with liberalism by the characteristic of anti-utopianism, and the value of negative liberty:

...pluralism imperfectability brings with it a positive recommendation: only those forms of politics are plausible which acknowledge and accommodate the effects of imperfection, in particular dissatisfaction, alienation and significant social conflict. Prominent among political forms that meet this description is liberalism [...] In short, pluralism recommends liberalism by way of *anti-utopianism*.<sup>247</sup>

And

Berlin says now one thing, now another. In some places he denies any necessary connection between pluralism and liberalism. But elsewhere he asserts that pluralism does indeed imply liberalism, as when he refers to 'pluralism, with the measure of *negative liberty* it entails'.<sup>248</sup>

John Gray, in contrast to Crowder, says that pluralism, despite some overlapping elements, is different in its main ideas from the traditional liberalism. For example, he says that pluralism does not claim liberal values, such as liberty, as absolute or universal:

In the pluralistic view, it is the recognition of the ultimate validity of conflicting claim, rather than the special claims of *liberty* (or liberalism), that is most stressed.<sup>249</sup>

And

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<sup>247</sup> Crowder, 2004, 146

<sup>248</sup> Crowder, 2004, 143

<sup>249</sup> Gray, *Berlin*, 167

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*Liberalism universalism* is at odds with value pluralism and must be rejected.

The analysis in this chapter will observe if pluralism is, or can be, another version of traditional liberalism. This will proceed by taking the main ideas of pluralism, and will compare them with the main ideas of traditional liberalism. The analysis will aim to show that the two theories are distinct from one another. They have different frameworks, different methods to achieve the universal values, different conceptions of the universal values, and different purposes of freedom of choice. Due to these differences, pluralism cannot be part of, or another version of, traditional liberalism.

When they are independent from one another, it shows that Berlin does not intend to write about pluralism in such a way as to present it as another version of traditional liberalism, nor to make it a normative theory or PUT by combining it with traditional liberalism. Instead he appears to merely present his idea of pluralism, which may have some overlapping elements with liberalism.

### **The frameworks: liberalism as priority monism VS pluralism**

It is likely, based on the description of priority monism in the first chapter, that liberalism's framework is similar to priority monism, which is obviously distinct from pluralism. The main elements in the framework of liberalism, which indicate liberalism as priority monism, and make it distinct from pluralism, are:

1) Liberalism has only *one* set of compatible ultimate values (such as liberty, autonomy, equality and rights<sup>251</sup>) while pluralism has *at least two* (but possibly a higher number of) ultimate values that are incompatible, incommensurable but considered equally worthy to one another. For example, pluralism can have both freedom and non-freedom values at the same time.

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<sup>250</sup> Crowder. 2004, 151

<sup>251</sup> Kekes, 1997, 15

2) Liberalism refers to the universal ranking, such as practical reasoning, to compare between ultimate values, so there is *a hierarchy ranking* and as a result there is *no conflict between them*. For example, in Rawls's two principles of justice, the value of equal right and freedom are at the top of the ranking, which is superior to the value of distributive justice. In this case, there is no conflict between them. Dworkin says:

...perhaps, after all, the most attractive conceptions of the leading liberal values do hand together  
in the right way.<sup>252</sup>

It is necessary to have the hierarchy ranking, Nagel says, since liberals need to prevent or resolve conflicts between the ultimate values:

...the [liberal] search for higher-order values, or for methods that permit the conflicts to be  
resolved, is a reasonable one.<sup>253</sup>

On the other hand, pluralism does not refer to any universal ranking to compare between the ultimate values, and as a result there is no hierarchy ranking. Pluralists justify all of them as *equally worthy* to one another. Consequently there are *always conflicts* between the ultimate values in pluralism.

3) Liberalism *does not have to compromise* between the ultimate values since there is no conflict between them. They do not have to choose values in order to compromise between them. They choose them following the suggestion of the hierarchy ranking. And when they choose one over the others, the ones that they do not choose are normally less valuable on the ranking. The sacrifice of the less valuable values is considered as *trading-off* (as justified by the universal ranking) rather than a loss. For example, if they need to choose between freedom and distribution, they would choose the first and sacrifice the latter following the hierarchy ranking. And this sacrifice is not considered as their loss but only the trading off of the less valuable value for the more valuable one.

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<sup>252</sup> Dworkin, LIB, 90

<sup>253</sup> Nagel, LIB, 110



On the other hand, pluralism always *needs to compromise* between their ultimate values since they are always conflicting. The compromise is necessary since the conflicts need to be resolved. And in order to compromise, they always need to choose one ultimate value over the other. Consequently, because pluralists justify their ultimate values as equally worthy or equally objective to one another, to sacrifice one for the other always creates *the feeling of loss*. For example, suppose they justify freedom and distribution as equally worthy to one another. When they need to choose between them, the one they sacrifice always create the feeling of loss for them.

As the framework set out above shows, liberalism has one set of compatible ultimate values at the top of the ranking, with the incompatible ones ranked beneath. So there is no conflict between them, and also no need to compromise. This framework is similar to that of priority monism (as referred to the description in the first chapter), which is significantly different from pluralism. The frameworks of liberalism and pluralism are therefore so clearly distinct from each other that it would be hard to reduce them into one and the same theory. Therefore it is **unlikely** that Berlin intends to write about pluralism in a way that presents it as part of, or another version of, liberalism.

### **The methods to achieve the universal values**

Another main difference between pluralism and traditional liberalism, as outlined roughly in chapter 3, can be found in the methods that they use to achieve the universal values. Liberalism (Rawls's is the version mainly referred to here) uses the method of the enlightenment, which relies on *science and rationality* to achieve their universal values. Pluralism, on the other hand, uses the method of the counter-enlightenment, which relies on *psychology* (i.e. the inside view) to achieve the universal values. The methods can be explained as follows:

## The liberal method of science and rationality

1) **Environment controlled:** As liberals rely on the enlightenment's scientific and rational concept of judgment, they try to make their procedure most *impartial*. So they exclude all particular contexts of the persons judging values, and the particular contexts of their society. They put the persons involved behind the 'veil of ignorance' (in Rawls's term) where they are unaware of those particular contexts. There are a few contexts left behind the veil which are the primary goods (i.e. they know that they desire liberties, opportunities, wealth, income, and self-respect), the general conditions of society (moderate scarcity), and the general facts about human social life. However, liberals believe that these general facts would not affect the impartiality of the procedure or they would not create any bias in the judgment of values. Freeman says:

...the veil of ignorance excludes this information; the veil and other conditions of the OP are designed to focus our attention upon the reasons that are morally relevant and to exclude those that are not...<sup>254</sup>

And Wenar says:

Were actual citizens to get together in real time to try to agree to principles of justice for their society the bargaining among them would be influenced by all sorts of factors irrelevant to justice, such as who could appear most threatening or who could hold out longest. The original position abstracts from all such irrelevant factors.<sup>255</sup>

2) **No identity:** Within the particular contexts that are excluded, there is the *identity* of the persons as well. That is, in the veil of ignorance, the persons do not know their place in society, their class, their income, their gender, their age, their cultures, their personal interests, their special psychological propensities and their natural assets. As mentioned, liberals want the persons in the hypothetical position or the OP to be most impartial in their decisions so they

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<sup>254</sup> Freeman, 144

<sup>255</sup> Wenar, L, (*Fall 2008 Edition*), "John Rawls", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/rawls/>>.

make them forgetting *who they are* when they enter the OP And by not knowing who they are, liberals believe that the persons would merely refer to their practical reasoning (or pure reasons) to choose values. Their choices would not involve with any of their particular self-interests. Liberals believe that this is the most appropriate conditions for the persons to be impartial in their reasoning and in their choices of values. Rawls says:

The idea of the OP is to set up a fair procedure so that any principles agreed to will be just.<sup>256</sup>

Freeman says:

What is distinctive about this agreement is that the persons do not know any particular facts about themselves or anyone else in society. The veil of ignorance has the effect of requiring the persons to make a strictly impartial choice, one that does not favor persons in their position.<sup>257</sup>

The OP conditions for the persons, and their environment, could be compared to the scientific laboratories where all elements of the environment are controlled. In these labs only elements considered relevant are left, so that there is nothing to interfere with the scientists' experiments. The scientists then can achieve the most precise scientific results.

3) **One set of universal values:** The results from the OP is, according to the liberals (i.e. Rawls'), one set of universal values (the two principles of justice in Rawls') which they believe everyone who enters into the OP would produce. That is, the result is the most impartial one which tends to be chosen by all impartial and rational persons. Wolff says:

Rawls says that any of us can think our way into the OP at any time. If we do, we will see for ourselves whether or not we would, in fact, choose his principles of justice.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Rawls, 1971, 118

<sup>257</sup> Freeman, 142

<sup>258</sup> Wolff, 1996, 174

## The pluralist method of psychological inside view

The pluralist method, which relies on the counter-enlightenment psychological idea, appears to be *in contrast* to the above liberal method. The procedure is as follows:

1) **Environment uncontrolled:** As pluralists rely on psychological method, rather than scientific and rational method, they do not need to construct an impartial procedure. They do not exclude any particular contexts of the persons but instead take into account all of them, such as their identity, cultures, respect, commitments and all knowledge about their particular society. An indication that Berlin would certainly not exclude the particular contexts of the persons and their society can be found, for example, when he refers to Vico on the importance of cultures:

Vico seemed to be concerned with the succession of human cultures – every society had, for him, its own vision of reality, of the world in which it lived, and of itself and its relations to its own past, to nature, to what it strove for.<sup>259</sup>

2) **Inside view:** With all the particular information, the persons in the pluralist method proceed the inside view into other people's mind and learn how they live in the different cultures or places or times. They do this by using their imagination such as to imagine if they were them how they would feel; if they have their identity how they would live their life, or if they have their respect and commitment how they would believe. It is to imagine other people's environment, try to understand their ways of life, share their perspectives and feelings and feel empathy for them. In this case, the persons take all the particular information into consideration rather than excluding them. Pluralists such as Berlin believe that the particular information is useful (rather than disturbing) for the persons to understand and to justify values than to justify them in the lab (or in the hypothetical situation) as the liberals. Berlin explains the process of the inside view as:

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<sup>259</sup> CTH, 8

Both thinkers [Herder and Vico] advocate the use of the historical imagination, which can enable us to ‘descend to’ or ‘enter’ or ‘feel oneself into’ the mentality of remote societies, thereby we understand them.<sup>260</sup>

As a result, they will be able to understand and feel empathy for others:

...if they open their minds sufficiently they can grasp how one might be a full human being, with whom one could communicate, and at the same time live in the light of values widely different from one’s own, but which nevertheless one can see to be values, ends of life, by the realization of which men could be fulfilled.<sup>261</sup>

3) **Many universal values:** The result from the psychological method is that the persons could approve the values of others as equally worthy or equally objective to their own. So they could approve many values as universal values at the same time, even though those values are conflicting with one another. And the approval of many universal values at the same time could be agreed by all, if all cultures use the same method to understand one another. Berlin says:

And, of course, we must not dramatize the incompatibility of values – there is a great deal of broad agreement among people in different societies over long stretches of time about what is right and wrong, good and evil.<sup>262</sup>

The above are the steps of the psychological method (or the inside view) used by pluralism to achieve the universal values, which is in contrast to the rational method (or the OP) of liberalism. Put simply, the pluralist psychological method is partial and emotional (to create empathy) while the liberal rational method is impartial and rational (to create justice).

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<sup>260</sup> CTH, 82

<sup>261</sup> CTH, 11

<sup>262</sup> CTH, 18

## **The comparison of the inside view with the secondary qualities**

Despite the partial and emotional characteristics of the inside view, Berlin insists that the universal values that result from the inside view are objective. In this case, one might explain the objectivity of the inside view by comparing it with the judgment of colors (the idea of McDowell). That is, in order to see a color, such as red, the persons need to have some particular conditions, such as their perception, or their sense organs, and they need to be in some particular conditions; for example, being in a place that has enough light to see by. In this instance, it is necessary that the persons' perception must respond correctly to the world in order for them to see a color such as red. Their judgment of red is subjective, since it depends on their perception, while it is at the same time objective, since every person with the same perceptive qualities would see the same color. The inside view tends to have the same nature as the secondary qualities; in order to justify ethical values such as cultural or religious values, the persons need to have some particular psychological conditions, such as the ability to understand, imagine and feel empathy for others. They also need to enter into the perspectives of others (or the worlds of others) in order to understand the meaning of ethical values clearly. Similarly, it is also necessary that the persons' psychological conditions must respond to the perspectives of others in order for them to be able to justify the values of others. In this case, as similar to the judgment of colors, the inside view is subjective since it depends on the persons' psychological conditions, while it is at the same time objective since every person with the same nature (of psychological conditions) would justify values in the same way. If we presented this in a diagram, we would then have the following:

### ***The judgment of colors***

*The persons' perception → respond to → the conditions of the world*

### ***The judgment of values by the inside view***

*The persons' psychological conditions → respond to → the worlds of others*

Rovane explains the process:

In both cases [ethics and colors], the phenomena at issue would not exist were it not for our subjective ways of responding to the world – evaluation in one case and color vision in the other.<sup>263</sup>

Put simply, pluralists believe that if the persons involved have the same psychological conditions (such as the ability to feel empathy for others) and are entering into particular perspectives (such as into the worlds of others), then they would judge values in the same way, which is either to accept them as equally worthy, or not to accept them. This makes the justification of values *objective*, without creating the hypothetical situation such as the OP, and without appealing to universal reasoning. It is the *universal nature* of psychological conditions that make the judgment of values objective.

McDowell compares the judgment of ethical values with the judgment of colors, and says that it is objective since there can be ‘error’. Rovane explains McDowell:

[for McDowell] there is still room for objectivity because there is still room for error. [...] According to him, even if there is no scientific explanation of what makes our ethical judgments true and false, we can still make sense of the possibility of error insofar as our judgments can still be fitting or not as ethical responses to the social reality around us.<sup>264</sup>

This should be consistent with Berlin’s view since, for him, the judgment of values is not relative. It does not depend on personal beliefs, but requires people’s nature of understanding and empathy to respond to some particular perspectives. There can be some unacceptable values (or the ‘errors’) which are the ones beyond people’s ability to understand and feel empathy.

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<sup>263</sup> Rovane C, (2009) ‘Did Williams find the truth in relativism’, *Reading Bernard Williams*, Callcut D, (ed.) *Reading Bernard Williams*, New York: Routledge. 65

<sup>264</sup> Rovane C, (2009) ‘Did Williams find the truth in relativism’, *Reading Bernard Williams*, Callcut D, (ed.) *Reading Bernard Williams*, New York: Routledge. 66

## The influences

As mentioned earlier, the liberal method comes from the enlightenment's attachment to science and rationality, and the pluralist method comes from the counter-enlightenment's attachment to psychology. Although Berlin is eclectic, as mentioned in the previous chapter, and takes some ideas from the counter-enlightenment and others from the enlightenment, the method that he uses to achieve the universal values in pluralism derives entirely from the counter-enlightenment.

Berlin mentions in his writings that the enlightenment method of acquiring truths (including social and ethical truths) relies mainly on science and rationality. And they also believe that the truths achieved from this method are the laws of nature, (which means they are objective). Crowder explains:

The third pillar of the French Enlightenment is for Berlin the most significant of all: *scientism*. The same modern scientific methods that have laid bare the hidden patterns of the natural world must produce the same results in the social world. From a secure basis either in self-evident axioms or in empirical observation, we can formulate, by way of logical *deduction or induction* respectively, the laws of nature.<sup>265</sup>

Regarding logical deduction, the liberal rational method comes from the idea that people's moral reasoning can be deduced from their shared abstract moral principles (i.e. reflective equilibrium). This deductive idea of liberalism is obviously a product of the enlightenment. Freeman explains Rawls's idea:

[Rawls] also believes in moral judgments' capacity for correctness, including truth or falsity. [...] A longstanding position on the justification of moral judgment and principles, which perhaps goes back to Plato is that they are inferable in some way (ideally by logical *deduction*) from the most abstract moral principles...

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<sup>265</sup> Crowder, 2004, 97



While using the ideas of rationality and deduction taken from the enlightenment, Rawls comes up with his own unique way of deducing, reasoning and justifying the universal values (which is the OP), as mentioned earlier.

Berlin, on the other hand, agrees with the counter-enlightenment's rejection of science and rationality and also the rejection of the objectivity of truths (or the laws of nature) derived from it. He agrees instead with the counter-enlightenment in the methodology of the inside view, and the particularity of the truths derived from it. Crowder says:

When it comes to the human world he insists that the methods of the natural sciences have serious limitations. They can describe the outward behavior of human beings, but they cannot account for the inner purposes which make that behavior human; for that we need the *inside view* of the historical and cultural imagination.<sup>266</sup>

Berlin derives these counter-enlightenment ideas especially from the work of Joseph de Maistre, who rejects human reason. Berlin is also influenced by Vico, Hamman and Herder, whose ideas he discusses in *Three Critics of the Enlightenment* (2000). These three critics reject natural sciences as the method to find the truths. Instead they claim, similarly to Crowder's quotation above, that science is for the study of only external subjects. It cannot be used to study internal subjects, such as social sciences and ethics. Moreover, the truths of those internal subjects are usually not objective, but particular, and we can study them only through the inside view or through experience alone.

Considering the above ideas of the counter-enlightenment, which influence Berlin, it appears that he derives them not only from Joseph de Maistre, Vico, Hamman and Herder but also from the three Russian thinkers – Herzen, Tolstoy and Turgenev – as mentioned in the previous chapters. These thinkers appear to have the same ideas as the three critics.

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<sup>266</sup> Crowder, 2004, 98

### **Liberal inside view and pluralist inside view**

While the methods between the two theories are clearly different and derive influence from the opposite groups of ideas, one might argue that Rawls's OP also has some extent of the inside view in the same way as Berlin's. For example, in the OP he asks the persons to forget their identities and then to imagine that they can be any person in society. In this case, the persons in the OP have to try to understand all people in society – the talented, the rich, the poor and the disabled – and to feel empathy for them. After all the imagination and understanding, there then comes the task of deciding the best value for all.

In this case, Rawls might agree with Mill's claim that to understand oneself is to understand others<sup>267</sup>, so he asks the persons in the OP to proceed with the inside view into all people in society, to understand all of them as if these people are themselves. This method of understanding themselves in all positions, for Rawls, could be considered the equivalent to the understanding of others.

This understanding of all people as themselves in the OP appears to be similar to the pluralists' inside view into other people's life. However, in the OP, the people know only a few contexts, and all of them are neutral and general. They do not know any specific details of society, such as the number of cultures or religions, and the number of the minority groups. As Wolff says:

There are just a few more pieces to add before the picture of the OP is complete. Rawls assumes that people are ignorant of certain facts about their society. They do not know its economic and political situation, its level of civilization or culture or the generation to which they belong.<sup>268</sup>

It could be said that the society used as the basis in the OP is too neutral and general. And the inside view into other people's lives that the persons in the OP use seem to be limited to only some general types of people, such as the talented, the rich, the poor and the disabled. As a result, the process of the inside view in

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<sup>267</sup> Bo L, 'The Moral Foundation of Liberalism', in *Perspectives*, Vol 3, No 1. p3.

<sup>268</sup> Wolff, 1996, 173

the OP is limited; it does not cover all groups of people, especially the minority ones. Therefore, it does not fully work. For example, when the persons do not know any cultures, religions and minority groups in their society, they might not choose values that support them, and instead choose the ones that support only the majority, the general types of people and the formal institutions in society instead. For example, Barber says:

In brief, because men in the OP cannot determine who they will actually be they can be counted on to make disinterested and thus fair rules; but because they also anticipate living as actual particular men they will reject rules which sacrifice the welfare of particular men to the general good.<sup>269</sup>

Moreover, the persons in the OP use the inside view in order to protect themselves. That is, they try to understand the lives of other people in the OP, and choose values that are fair to all in order to ensure that if they were them outside the OP they would be fine. Their inside view into other people's life therefore aims merely at protecting their own life or interests. This can be supported by Rawls's claims that the persons in the OP care only for their own interests. They are disinterested in others.

This is different from Berlin's inside view in which the persons use it in order to genuinely understand other people who are different from them and to recognize their life and values. All the particular natures that the pluralist method of inside view take into account (but which liberals exclude from the OP), such as other people's desires, interests, cultures, ways of life, attitude and so on, help them to understand and feel empathy for others. Therefore, the inside view procedure used by the two theories are different in that the liberal one is *for protecting their own life*, or their own interests, while the pluralist one is *for genuinely understanding one another*.

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<sup>269</sup> Barber B, (1989) 'Justifying Justice: Problems of Psychology, Politics and Measurement in Rawls', in Daniels N, (ed.) (1989) *Reading Rawls*, Stanford: Stanford University Press. 294

Apart from the above, by using these different methods, the liberal rational method and the pluralist psychological method lead to a number of other differences.

### **The different conceptions of universal values**

The different methods between liberalism and pluralism also results in their universal values having different conceptions. With the liberal rational method, their universal values are the production of the (impartial) *practical reasoning that all people share*. On the other hand, by the pluralist psychological method, their universal values are the production of the *feeling of empathy that all people share*. These create different conceptions of their universal values. For example, freedom is the production of the practical reasoning that all people share (in the OP), while a diversity of cultures are the production of the shared empathy. Their universal values therefore have the different conceptions from one another. Freeman explains Rawls's idea:

Doctrinal autonomy assumes only that free and equal citizens *share certain reasonable moral/political beliefs*, in spite of their many differences.<sup>270</sup>

And Hardy and Crowder explain Berlin's idea that we can all share the feeling of empathy. Hardy says:

How is our capacity to empathize with other cultures whose particular values we do not share evidence (as Berlin thinks it is) of universal values that we share or ought to share? Crowder's answer is that we are able to empathize with the values of other cultures because they are specific interpretations of more generic values that we do share...<sup>271</sup>

With this capacity to feel empathy with the values of others, the universal values in pluralism are the production of the empathy that all people share.

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<sup>270</sup> Freeman, 2007, 355

<sup>271</sup> Hardy, OAM, 297

In other words, we can say that liberalism and pluralism have *different grounds* for justifying the universality of values – for liberals it is the shared practical reasoning that justifies the universality of values while for pluralists it is the shared empathy that justified the universality of values.

### **The prejudice elimination**

Whether it is the shared practical reasoning or the shared empathy, it seems that both theories need some kind of *agreement* from all people in order to justify the universal values. And that agreement appears to be only possible when people are without prejudice. The different methods between liberalism and pluralism in this case can be seen as *their different ways to eliminate people's prejudice*. Prejudice has a different meaning from partiality. The first means *negative feelings* towards something, such as some groups of people in society. These negative feelings could lead to, for example, discrimination against some groups or races. The latter on the other hand involves positive feelings towards something, such as their commitment to, or respect for their cultures. These positive feelings lead to, for example, favoritism for some groups or races. Susan Wolff stresses the positive feelings of the term partiality by giving example of the relationship with friends and family. She says:

Surely, relationships with friends and family have a different and deeper kind of value. It is not just alright but positively good that a person goes hiking with a friend, that she helps a neighbor start his car, that she brings her children presents, bakes them cookies, teaches them songs, More generally, it is not just alright but positively good that such relationships form part of a person's life. [...] For these reasons, the impartialist, like the partialist, will not only praise the person who does help her friends, but on some occasions, morally criticize the person who fails to do so.<sup>272</sup>

While the two terms – prejudice and partiality – have opposite meanings, it does not follow that to eliminate prejudice partiality needs to be eliminated too. Pluralism seems to eliminate only the prejudice (or the discrimination against some groups or races), but keep the partiality (or the persons' commitment to their cultures) in their method.

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<sup>272</sup> Susan W, (1992) 'Morality and Partiality', in *Philosophy Perspectives*, Vol 6, 248

As mentioned, both liberals and pluralists need to eliminate people's prejudice since it might prevent them from reaching agreement. For example, in liberal OP, if the persons hate the disabled, they might not agree with the values that assist them. So liberals set up the procedure so that there is a chance that the persons may become disabled outside the OP. In this situation, their hatred would be eliminated (by the chance of themselves being disabled) and the persons become willing to agree with the values that assist the disabled. In the pluralist procedure, using the inside view, if the persons hate some particular religions, say, Buddhism, they might not then agree with Buddhist values being universal values. So the pluralists ask them to imagine if they were Buddhists, to understand their lives and values, and then to feel empathy for them. In this case, their hatred is eliminated by understanding and empathy, and the persons can agree with the Buddhist values as universal values.

Those are two different ways to eliminate people's prejudice in order to make an agreement possible so that the universal values can be justified. To explain further, liberals eliminate people's prejudice by *eliminating the division between 'me and them'*. This is because, if there is the division, the persons might agree only for the interest of 'me', and might not think about the interests of 'them' (as Rawls claims that they are disinterested in others). This is especially relevant in the situation in which they hate 'them'. Liberals eliminate the division by saying that there is an equal chance for every group of people in society to turn out to be 'me' (outside the OP) so the prejudice is consequently eliminated. Pluralists, on the other hand, eliminate people's prejudice by *enhancing the understanding of 'them'*. Pluralists are also aware that people often agree with only the interests of 'me', i.e. themselves, and do not think about the interests of 'them'. They however solve this problem in the opposite way, by asking people to enter into 'them', and to look more closely into the life and feelings of 'them' so that they come to understand 'them' more, and consequently become more concerned in the interests of 'them' as well. In this case, pluralists reduce prejudice by enhancing understanding and empathy. As Berlin says:

[they] can always, if they are sufficiently imaginative and try hard enough, contrive to understand  
– that is, see to be intelligible ends of life for human beings situated as these men were...<sup>273</sup>

In other words, the above contrast between the two theories seems to be that liberals use *self-interest* to eliminate prejudice while pluralists use *empathy* to eliminate prejudice. But this does not mean that liberals do not have the idea of empathy at all. As mentioned earlier, Mill claims that ‘if you can get a person interested in himself, by contrast, you need apply little more than a gentle nudge to get him interested in others as well’.<sup>274</sup> So liberals also have the idea of empathy but seem to believe that it follows from self-interest.

### **The application to the real world**

From the liberal rational method explained above, it seems that liberals try to avoid the metaphysical ideals or truths in which philosophers or religions claim to believe. They seem to hold that those metaphysical truths are something we cannot observe or prove by ourselves; that they are beyond our ability to know or to prove. For example, Freeman explains that Rawls tries to avoid the metaphysical truths as follows:

[Rawls] wants to avoid the use of ‘true’ within Political Liberalism [...] it is because the concept of truth applied to moral principles is a metaphysical concept...<sup>275</sup>

Richardson claims that Rawls’s avoidance of metaphysical truths derives from Kant’s idea of autonomy. He says:

Kant held that the true principles of morality are not imposed on us by our psyches or by eternal conceptual relations that hold true independently of us; rather, Kant argued, the moral law is a law that our reason gives to itself. It is, in this sense, self-chosen or autonomous law.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> CTH, 79

<sup>274</sup> Bo L, ‘The Moral Foundation of Liberalism’, *Perspectives*, Vol 3, No 1, 3

<sup>275</sup> Freeman, 2007, 356

<sup>276</sup> Richardson, (2005) ‘John Rawls’, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, url >  
<http://www.iep.utm.edu/rawls/#SSH2c.iii>

In this case, Rawls says:

[The OP] may be viewed as a procedural interpretation of Kant's conception of autonomy...<sup>277</sup>

Liberals therefore rely instead on the scientific and rational methods (as mentioned above) since they believe it is within our ability to observe and to prove. For example, they say we all can enter into the OP (through imagination, through example) and use our own rationality to observe the values in the OP and come to agree on the ones fair to all. We all can do this by ourselves. Freeman explains:

It might be said that principles uniformly derived therein are given to us by *our own practical reason*. To act for the sake of these principles is to be morally autonomous.<sup>278</sup>

The OP is therefore constructed in order to encourage us to use our rationality to the full. This way, we do not need to appeal to anything outside or beyond our own observation and consideration. As mentioned, the liberal OP can be compared to the scientist's lab, which is constructed (through controlling the environment and elements) in order to let the scientists do the best experiments so that they can achieve the results. Liberals seem to adapt the method from sciences but use it with moral issues.

And, since the method of the liberals does not refer to anything beyond our ability to observe and to know but all within our own rationality, scholars claim that the theory can certainly be applied to the real world. Freeman says:

[In Rawls's method] it says moral principles are constituted out of the activity of practical reason, and do not have their origins in an independent moral order (such as God's will).<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Rawls, TJ, 1999, 226

<sup>278</sup> Freeman, 2007, 352

<sup>279</sup> Freeman, 2007, 355



However, the above claim on the application of the liberal rational method to the real world seems to be in doubt, since the OP is the hypothetical situation wherein the elements are unreal. The persons in the OP are the ideal men who have a lack of knowledge about themselves and about their society. This is certainly different from the real world where there are a diversity of groups and cultures. And the ideal men are certainly different from the real men who have particular interests, irrational thoughts and the full knowledge about themselves and their society. The values that the ideal men choose in the OP, therefore, are naturally not similar to the ones the real men will choose in the real world. From Barber's claim it seems that Rawls acknowledges this point:

Rawls knows that while he can strip men in the OP of particular interests and particular desires he cannot leave them bereft of interest and desire altogether or they will cease to be men at all. "Human actions" do, after all, 'spring from existing desires'.<sup>280</sup>

The unreal situation and persons in the OP seems to be according to Rawls's intention which is to encourage the persons to use their rationality to the full. As Wolff says

We end up with a view of people in the OP who are very unlike real people. But this is not a criticism of the theory. The conditions of the OP, behind the veil of ignorance, are not meant to describe the nature of a person but to act as a methodological device, a device which helps us come to a view about the correct principles of justice.<sup>281</sup>

And Rawls believes that, despite the unreal situation in the OP, it can be applied to the real (non-ideal) world. As Wenar says:

Completing ideal theory first, Rawls says, yields a systematic understanding of how to reform our non-ideal world, and fixes a vision of what is the best that can be hoped for.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Barber, 1989, 294

<sup>281</sup> Wolff, 1996, 173

<sup>282</sup> Wenar, L, (*Fall 2008 Edition*) "John Rawls", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/rawls/>>.

However, it is criticized that the ideal characters of the persons (such as without any particular desires and interests at all) are way too much so that they become 'inhuman'. And this inhuman condition might make the result in the OP unreal and cannot be applied in the real world. That is, the persons in the OP tend to choose something they would not choose in the real world. For example, as mentioned earlier, they would choose the general rules over the particular rules while they would not do so if they have all the particular desires and interests. On the other hand, the unreal nature of the persons in the OP does not seem to be consistent with Rawls's results (the two principles of justice) or it would not lead to the results. For example, the persons in the OP who do not have desires and particular interests tend not to choose liberty as Rawls claims, since it is not likely that they would want liberty in order to enhance their interests further. According to Barber, without particularity (or particular interests) the concept of self-interest has no meaning:

At the level of psychology it seems possible that particularity is built into the notion of interest and that it cannot be cut away without rendering interest unintelligible.<sup>283</sup>

So the persons involved probably choose social welfare instead of liberty. In this case, even if Rawls's two principles are real (i.e. being the most rational ones in the real world), they tend not to result from the unreal persons in the OP

Barber claims that if Rawls includes the particular contexts into the OP and makes the OP more real, then the OP would be more consistent with his results. In other words, the OP, if it was more real, would lead to Rawls's results to a greater extent than if it was unreal. Barber says:

I believe that [...] additional assumptions about men that contaminate the OP need to be made if the rules of justice as fairness are to be regarded as the inevitable choice of rational men in the OP.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Barber, 1989, 295

<sup>284</sup> Barber, 1989, 294

Moreover, Rawls claims that because the persons in the OP do not know who they are in the real world, they therefore obtain the special psychological condition which is to avoid as much risk as possible. As a result, they will choose the maximin rule in the OP. This special psychological condition is criticized by many scholars as unreal (or untrue). The persons in the OP do not necessarily have this condition. They might, if the context were more real, obtain other kinds of attitude towards risk: they might for example take medium risk or even high risk (and choose the maximax rule) if those risks would give them more pleasure. Barber says:

It is no less rational, although suggestive of a different and less conservative temperament to be sure, for men to pursue, say, a moderate risk strategy whose aim would be to create the possibility of somewhat greater gains than afforded by maximin even at the risk of somewhat greater possible losses.<sup>285</sup>

From all the above, although the liberals claim that their rational method can be applied to the real world, their claim is in doubt since the unreal conditions in their hypothetical procedure might make it difficult for the method to be applied to the real world.

Pluralists do not believe in any metaphysical ideals or truths, such as those claimed in philosophy or religion as well. In fact pluralists do not believe in anything beyond observation at all. For example, Berlin says:

The subject with which I myself wish to deal is confined in time. I do not wish to deal with a permanent human attitude, but with a particular transformation which occurred historically and affects us today.<sup>286</sup>

It seems that Berlin and other pluralists follow the realist idea of the counter-enlightenment on this issue. Crowder explains the counter-enlightenment's idea on truth as:

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<sup>285</sup> Barber, 1989, 297

<sup>286</sup> ROR, 6

Truth, for human beings, is intensely particular, accessible through concrete experience alone.  
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While pluralists agree with liberals on the rejection of the metaphysical ideals, their method is more real (i.e. more consistent with the real world) than that of the liberals. This is according to the inside view (as mentioned above), which takes into account all the particular contexts of the persons and societies such as their particular interest, respect and commitment on values and all the particular groups and cultures in societies. As a result, according to the pluralist method individuals take into account everything in the real world, or everything they observe in real society; they then justify the universal values based on the real world that they observe. There is no appeal to the hypothetical situation where all factors in the society are controlled as in the OP; the focus rests instead on real particular situations in the real world. In this case, pluralists might follow the counter enlightenment's idea of the 'sense of reality', which gives more value to real life than to any hypothetical situation and impartial reasoning. Referring to Tolstoy as a counter-enlightenment thinker, Berlin says:

[Tolstoy] had far more respect for all forms of real life [...] than for the world of books, reviews, critics, professors, political discussions and talk about ideals...<sup>288</sup>

The sense of reality that pluralists admire in the counter-enlightenment thinkers might be the main reason why they avoid using the hypothetical situation favored by liberals.

Put simply, liberals seem to be certain that their rational method can be applied to the real world, by virtue of their appeal to rationality (which is shared by all men in the real world) for the justification of values. But they need a strict control over the elements taken into account in order to use rationality to the full. As a result of this strict control, their method might be limited in the possibility to be applied to the real world as compared with pluralist method, which appeals

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<sup>287</sup> Crowder, 2004, 101

<sup>288</sup> RT, 279

to psychology to justify values. The psychological method does not require pluralists to control or limit the elements taken into account, so their method obtains more possibility to be applied to the real world.

### **Different perspectives on resolving conflicts in practice**

The difference between the methods of liberalism and pluralism, moreover, reflect their different means of resolving conflicts in society. That is, liberals seem to believe that to rely on *universal rationality and moral truths* is the way to resolve conflicts in societies, whilst pluralists seem to rely instead on a *psychological method* (such as understanding and empathy) as the way to resolve conflicts in society. It seems to be Berlin's opinion that, in practice, the psychological method of the pluralists seems to be more effective. Berlin says:

The collisions, even if they cannot be avoided, can be softened. Claims can be balanced, compromised can be reached.<sup>289</sup>

The process of liberalism is this: when conflicts arise, liberals refer to universal rationality and moral truths (such as freedom and equality) to resolve conflicts; they then tend to give priority to the group that agrees with the moral truths (according to the universal rationality) over the group that is against those same moral truths. Or they might accept the demand of the first while rejecting the demand of the latter. For example, liberals who are committed to the truths of freedom and equality tend not to accept the demand of the illiberal groups. Grayling, for example, says that some traditions that abuse individual freedom – such as wearing the burqa or a full veil in some religions – should be banned.

...in principle I'm very much with *laïcité*, the idea of having a neutral, equal public domain, where you're not going to listen to attempts by people to say, "look, I'm wearing a big crucifix" or, "look I'm covering my head" so, "you've got to treat me differently."<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> CTH, 17

<sup>290</sup> Peter B, (2010) 'The Meaning of Life: Interview with Professor A.C. Grayling', *The Free Thinkers*, available at <http://freethinker.co.uk/2010/02/22/the-meaning-of-life-an-interview-with-professor-a-c-grayling/>

In this case, liberals do not give illiberal groups an equal weight or respect compared with the respect they give to the liberal groups. As regards this issue, Rawls denies that he refers to liberal values in order to resolve conflicts in society. He claims that all conflicts (especially regarding cultures or religions) must be open to the negotiations between all groups or cultures. He says:

The correct regulative principle for anything depends on the nature of that thing.<sup>291</sup>

However, his principles turn out to be in contrast to his claim. Rawls (like all liberals) does give more weight (or priority) to liberal values than he does to cultural or religious differences, even within the overlapping consensus. As Kymlicka says:

[Rawls] says that one essential part of the overlapping consensus is an agreement to conceive of citizens as having the ‘moral power’ to ‘form, revise and pursued’ a conception of the good. This is in fact one of our two basic moral powers along with a sense of justice.<sup>292</sup>

He might believe that all groups or cultures naturally agree with the value of freedom and equality even when they refer to their own moral beliefs or their religious beliefs. As Wenar says:

Citizens within an overlapping consensus work out for themselves how the liberal “module” fits into their own worldviews. Some citizens may see liberalism as derived directly from their deepest beliefs...<sup>293</sup>

However, in reality, not all groups or religions would agree with liberal values, especially in relation to their religious beliefs. That is, many illiberal groups do not share the liberals’ notions of universal rationality and liberal moral truths (such as freedom and equality). As a result, they cannot take part in the

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<sup>291</sup> Rawls, TJ, 1971, 29

<sup>292</sup> Kymlicka, 2002, 234

<sup>293</sup> Wenar, L, (*Fall 2008 Edition*) "John Rawls", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/rawls/>>.

overlapping consensus. And when liberals give priority to liberal values (even in the overlapping consensus) and liberal groups by accepting their demands and by denying those of illiberal groups, the latter will feel that they are discriminated against by the majority. They will consequently deny coming to an agreement with the majority in society. This is because apart from the fact that they do not hold the same moral rationality, they might also feel that they do not receive a fair treatment in the first place. They might not understand why the government gives priority to liberal values over their own values. So they tend to deny any co-operation or agreement required by the government. Their denial might lead to more conflicts in society or in some cases it could lead to violence. The events of September 11th 2001 can be seen as an example of this problem.

The process of pluralism, on the other hand, is this: when conflicts arise, pluralists do not resort to any universal rationality or any moral truths, since they do not have any; instead, they resolve conflicts by asking each group to understand each other's problems and to feel empathy for one another. In this case, as they do not decide the right and wrong (or truth and false) for them, and nor do they take sides; instead, they give both sides an equal weight or respect. None would feel discriminated. The intended result seems to be that both groups, by receiving an equal treatment and by understanding one another to a more extent, would agree to sacrifice some of their beliefs or demands, and thereby finally come to an agreement with one another. Violent actions can be prevented. This is possible because Berlin believes that people can always understand one another even if they do not agree. He says:

I am not blind to what the Greeks valued – their values may not be mine but I can grasp what it would be like to live by their light, I can admire and respect them, and even imagine myself as pursuing them, although I do not – and do not wish to, and perhaps could not if I wished.<sup>294</sup>

This way of resolving conflicts might look like the 'modus vivendi'. However, it does not depend on the political power of each side in order to come to an

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<sup>294</sup> CTH, 11

agreement. It rather depends on the feeling of empathy of both sides in order to come to an agreement.

If the results mentioned above are true, then the universal rationality and moral truths which seemed to be the effective means towards finding solutions to conflicts turn out to be less effective in practice, since it seems difficult, by referring to the universal rationality and moral truths, for the different groups to come to an agreement with one another if they do not share the same rationality and truths. While the psychological method of understanding one another seems to be a less effective way of finding solutions to conflicts, for example, people believe it deals only with feelings and emotions, and that it cannot in consequence be used to find any solutions; yet it turns out to be more effective in practice since it is easier for the different groups to agree with one another when they understand and feel empathy for one another.

For all the above reasons – especially the different frameworks and the different methods to justify the universal values – it is clear that pluralism is a distinct theory from traditional (or enlightenment) liberalism (especially Rawls' version).

### **John Gray**

John Gray also believes that pluralism is a distinct theory from traditional liberalism. For example, he says:

All the dominant liberalisms of our time, whether they be variations on Hobbesian or Lockean, Kantian or Millian themes, have conception of *rational choice* at their heart which Berlin's value pluralism subverts.<sup>295</sup>

However, he says that the necessity of negative liberty (or the freedom to choose between the conflicting ultimate values) in pluralism entails that pluralism is liberalism. As mentioned, there are at least two ultimate values in pluralism, so pluralists need to compromise between them, and to thereby choose one and

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<sup>295</sup> Gray, *Berlin*, 145



sacrifice the other. To choose between and to sacrifice ultimate values requires pluralists to have freedom of choice and this, according to Gray, makes pluralism collapse into liberalism. Gray says:

Value-pluralism supports liberalism here in that it is by the choices protected by negative freedom that we negotiate our way among incommensurable values.<sup>296</sup>

With the belief that pluralism is a distinct theory from traditional liberalism, but whilst holding that it inevitably implies liberalism by its emphasis on the value of freedom of choice, Gray proposes his idea of pluralism as ‘**agonist liberalism**’ or a particular (non-absolute) liberalism. It is the liberal theory that *does not always attach to the liberal core values*, but which allows people in liberal societies to choose illiberal values and cultures. Gray explains agonist liberalism:

It is manifest, first of all, that conceptions of the priority of the right over the good in political philosophy, of justice as the first virtue of social institutions and of the neutrality of justice (and of the liberal state) with respect to specific conceptions of the good life, must all be abandoned.<sup>297</sup>

And if pluralism is liberalism such as in Gray’s version, pluralism tends to be a normative theory (PUT). And Gray seems to believe that pluralism is PUT. Gray says:

Berlin’s central idea of pluralism in ultimate values denies human beings the metaphysical comfort, itself answering to a nearly *universal* human need, whereby their particular forms of life are accorded a *universal authority*...<sup>298</sup>

However, it seems that if pluralism is another version of liberalism, as proposed by Gray, then it will be self-defeating. This will be explained in the following section.

### Gray’s agonist liberalism

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<sup>296</sup> Gray, *Berlin*, 143

<sup>297</sup> Gray, EW, 110

<sup>298</sup> Gray, *Berlin*, 168

Before claiming that Gray's theory is self-defeating, it is worth observing the main ideas of his theory. Gray's 'agonist liberalism' (elsewhere referred to as 'the other liberalism' or 'post-Enlightenment liberalism') is a new liberal theory that he develops from his reading of Berlin's pluralism. The overall ideas of Gray's theory are that the cultural identity and cultural differences are important and should be taken into account. Gray says:

On the alternative view that I shall develop, the propensity to *cultural difference is a primordial attribute* of the human species; human identities are plural and diverse in their very natures, a natural languages are plural and diverse and they are always variations on particular forms of common life, never exemplars of universal humanity.<sup>299</sup>

As a result, Gray suggests that the demand for identity or cultural recognition should be accepted.

Similar to Berlin, Gray rejects the notion of the absolute truth of all values; even the liberal core values. And he also rejects the aim of striving for perfection by attempting to realize a harmonious society. Like Berlin, he claims that values are incommensurable, but he seems to put it in an extreme way, in which the comparison of values from different contexts is completely impossible, and in which choosing between them is totally irrational. He says:

[Agonist liberalism] consists in making a decision or a commitment that is groundless.<sup>300</sup>

From the above, it seems that the agonist liberalism is very close to pluralism. The difference might be that Berlin's pluralism does not rule out all the comparability of values and the rationality of choices. The ultimate values in pluralism (as mentioned in my first chapter) are comparable insofar as they are equally worthy as one another, and the choices between them can be made based upon people's cultural reasons or identity. The facts that ultimate values are

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<sup>299</sup> Gray, *EW*, 98

<sup>300</sup> Gray, *EW*, 105.

equally worthy, and that choices between them can be made by appealing to cultural reasons, insist that there is some level of comparability and rationality in pluralism. It is not all groundless.

The most important idea in Gray's theory is that the liberal core values are not absolute, but can be sacrificed in some cases. By viewing the liberal values as non-absolute, Gray claims that liberal values belong merely to liberal culture, which is not universal but local. It is only one culture or one form of life among many others. Gray says:

This has the large implication that allegiance to a liberal form of life must always be a matter of cultural solidarity, not of universalizing rationality.<sup>301</sup>

And Crowder explains Gray's idea:

... [for Gray] liberal values are always in competition with others on an equal footing rather than always superior. They are locally valid, not universally.<sup>302</sup>

Therefore, his agonist liberalism is open to the illiberal values and cultures as well. He says that we should not exclude illiberal cultures on the grounds that their quality of life is worse or is not within the minimum universal requirement. On the contrary, some illiberal cultures are equally good or sometimes better off in their quality of life compared with liberal cultures. For example, Gray says:

Liberal regimes may sometimes satisfy the minimum universal requirements of morality [such as freedom from the threat of violent death, human sympathy and fairness] less well than some non-liberal or post liberal regimes.<sup>303</sup>

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301      Gray, *EW*, 120.

302      Crowder, 2004, 149

303      Gray, *EW*, 123.

In this case, Gray seems to justify the illiberal cultures as equally worthy in their own contexts vis a vis liberal cultures. He also accepts their availability in his agonist liberalism. As Crowder explains:

For Gray, the best possible world under pluralism is one in which there is a wide variety of ways of life and political regimes, some liberal, some not.<sup>304</sup>

From all the above, whilst Gray's agonist liberalism or his reading of Berlin's pluralism is quite close to Berlin's own view, his attempt to make it another version of liberalism seems failed. This is because while he tries to establish a liberalism that accepts its values as particular and/or does not attach itself to liberal core values all the time, it is hard for his version liberalism to retain the status of liberalism per se. His theory is thus forced to:

Either 1) **sacrifice the priority of the liberal core values**: because Gray suggests that priority should be removed from liberal core values, he wants his theory to be without any such priority, or as mentioned, he wants it to be open to illiberal values as much as possible. However this is hardly possible, since liberalism without core values or with no priority at all will make it **collapse into pluralism** (which commits it to the equal worth of the ultimate values). It therefore cannot retain its status as liberalism in this case.

Or 2) **to retain the liberal core values**: on the other hand, if Gray wants to hold onto the status of liberalism, he has to maintain the liberal core values and their hierarchical rank. But in order to retain them, his theory cannot be open to illiberal values to the extent that he desires. The illiberal cultures that he wants his agonist liberalism to accept would face difficulties in liberal societies where liberal values are still superior. As Gray says:

They will be conflicts in which at least some non liberal regimes and cultural forms possess genuine virtues and harbor authentic excellences that are weak or lacking in liberal regimes.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Crowder, 2004, 149

<sup>305</sup> Gray, EW, 129

Moreover, if Gray decides to retain liberal core values (in order to maintain its status as liberalism) his theory would become similar to the traditional liberalism which he himself rejects.

According to the above, either way Gray's agonist liberalism as liberalism would fail. It is self-defeating. But if Gray proposes his theory as a form of pluralism, rather than maintaining its position as liberalism, his claim would be consistent.

### **Freedom of choice**

When Gray's agonist liberalism is self defeating and pluralism cannot be liberalism by his idea, there is still the issue that the freedom of choice that pluralism seems to require might entail liberalism. That is, pluralism might collapse into liberalism by having this value as a core value.

However, the nature of choices and the purpose of freedom of choice in pluralism are different from those in liberalism. The differences will be spelled out as follows:

#### **1) The different natures of choices**

Choices in liberalism are *limited*. There are only liberal values and liberal cultures and some other cultures that have their ideas as consistent with liberal values such as freedom and equality. The illiberal values or cultures that restrict freedom of their members are not allowed in liberalism. As Kymlicka says:

Yet Rawls does not allow traditionalist communitarian groups to establish millet-like systems.

His definition of freedom of conscience is the full liberal one...

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<sup>306</sup> Kymlicka, 2002, 234

Gray says that liberalism restricts the right based values such as freedom and equality as to be absolute while leaving the choices open only for the good based values such as the conceptions of the good. Gray says:

In this standard liberal view, principles of justice or liberty are not substantive goods to be traded off against other goods, but regulative principles, principles of right which set terms on which competing goods and conceptions of the good can be pursued.<sup>307</sup>

Choices in pluralism on the other hand are more open. They do not limit only liberal values and cultures, but allow the illiberal values and cultures as well. Gray says that pluralism leaves the choices open for the alternatives of the right based values as well. In other words, pluralists accept the illiberal values as well. Gray claims:

This argument presupposes the truth of precisely those conventional liberalisms which Berlin's value pluralism challenges and that his claim that liberties may embody rivalrous and incommensurable values, if it is at all valid, destroys.<sup>308</sup>

The only restriction in pluralism is that the values or cultures must be within the human horizon of non-violence and psychological conditions. In this case, many illiberal values and cultures do not have any problems to fit in. For example, Gray says:

The likely prospect, on all current trends, is not only of the East Asian societies overtaking Western liberal individualist societies in the economic terms of growth, investment, saving and living standard; it is also of their doing so while preserving and enhancing common cultural forms which assure to their subjects *personal security in their everyday lives* and a public environment that is rich in choice worthy options.<sup>309</sup>

Because of the open choices in pluralism, Gray claims that pluralism is a more genuine liberal theory. That is, the welcoming of illiberal cultures entails greater

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<sup>307</sup> Gray, *Berlin*, 146

<sup>308</sup> Gray, *Berlin*, 147

<sup>309</sup> Gray, *EW*, 127

freedom of choice. On the other hand, the limitation of choices to only liberal values and cultures in traditional liberalism means the suppression of values. Or, it can mean that liberalism imposes their values on people. So between traditional liberalism and pluralism, pluralism, in Gray's view, is a more genuine liberal theory.

It is likely that Gray believes that the diversity of choices in pluralism (the welcome of the illiberal values) entails more freedom. However, while the choices in pluralism are not limited to only liberal values and cultures, it is possible that in some situations or contexts there might be no liberal choices for people to choose at all. There might be only illiberal choices for them to choose. This is because although Berlin supports negative liberty, he does not claim it to be absolute, and nor does he impose it on people as liberals do. For Berlin, negative liberty can be sacrificed in some necessary situations. And in the situations where pluralists decide to sacrifice negative liberty, there might be only illiberal values and cultures for people to choose. So the diversity of choices in pluralism in some cases might contain only non-freedom values or cultures. The diversity of choices in this case does not entail more freedom as Gray believes. It might entail non-freedom instead.

On the other hand, as mentioned, the choices in liberalism must be between liberal values and cultures only, so liberal choices certainly entail freedom. But the fact that there is always only one sides of choices (only liberal values), it means that there can be no diversity of choices in liberalism. Put simply, the choices in liberalism entail only freedom but not diversity.

In this case, freedom and diversity are not parallel with one another, or do not necessarily go together. They are distinct values. Gray seems to misinterpret that although the diversity of choices in pluralism must entail freedom, it is in fact not necessary. Pluralists can have diversity (of choices) without freedom (in some cases) and liberals seem to have freedom without diversity.

All the above discussions show the different natures of choices in liberalism and pluralism. The following discussion will be about the different purposes of their freedom of choice.

## 2) Creating self-identity VS Resolving conflict

Another difference regarding their freedom of choice is that liberals' freedom of choice aims at self-creation. That is, the rational method which excludes the particular contexts of the persons before they enter into the OP makes their identity neutral. This identity is called the unencumbered self. Liberals believe that the persons with neutral identity (or unencumbered self) will use their rationality to the full, since they do not have to worry about their own particular interests. And their unencumbered self, which seems to be very general, will encourage the persons to reason and choose values that help them create their identity. As a result, they will choose freedom of choice to help them create or enhancing their identity further when they come out of the OP. For example, Wolff says that they choose liberty to prevent any discrimination against the conceptions of the good that they might have outside the OP:

As you do not know which group or groups you belong to it would be irrational to discriminate against one portion of society.<sup>310</sup>

While the persons in the O.P are influenced by their neutral identity, we might be able to assume that the persons in the O.P do not actually refer to their rationality to choose values as Rawls claims. But they tend to refer to their insecure emotions. That is, by their neutral identity, they might feel insecure not to know who they are. So they choose the values such as freedom to ensure that they can create their own identity; that they can choose to be what they want, outside the OP. Freedom tends to make them feel more secure about their identity. The liberal rational method in this case turns out to be a psychological method. Barber also believes that the choices in the OP result from psychological conditions rather than from rationality:

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<sup>310</sup> Wolff, 1996, 177



All such strategies are cut from the same cloth and are part of a fabric that has nothing to do with rationality. In the absence of these kinds of preferences the two rules of justice simply are not defeasible as the inevitable choices of rational men in the OP <sup>311</sup>

And Wolff asks:

Might this mean that the choice is a matter of temperament, rather than rationality? <sup>312</sup>

While the persons in the OP choose value such as freedom in order to enhance their identity further (outside the O.P), Gray claims that individuals in pluralism also choose values for the same reason – self-creation – despite the fact that in some situations there are only illiberal values for them to choose from. For example, Gray says that people in the illiberal cultures who are only able to choose illiberal values still choose in order to create their identity. Gray says:

The value of negative freedom in Berlin's thought is as a condition of *self creation through choice making*. The selves that are created or amended through choice making may or may not be selves which need negative freedom for their continued self creation. <sup>313</sup>

However, it seems unlikely that the persons in pluralism choose values for self-creation (or anything relating to the conception of the self). This is because Berlin does not agree with the unencumbered self of the liberals. He tends to agree more with the idea of collective self proposed by communitarians. The notion of a collective self stems from the claim that people develop their self from society and cultures and are not interested in developing it further by their own choices. Berlin gives an indication that he agrees with the collective self when he says that:

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<sup>311</sup> Barber, 1989, 300

<sup>312</sup> Wolf, 1996, 184

<sup>313</sup> Gray, *Berlin*, 159

The ways in which men live, think, feel, speak to one another, the clothes they wear, the songs they sing, the God they worship, the food they eat, the assumptions, customs, habits, which are intrinsic to them, it is this that creates communities, each of which has its own life-style. <sup>314</sup>

With this type of identity, the persons in pluralism need not to choose values that help them create their identity. They have their identity already, and they know it (they do not forget it as do the persons in the O.P). As a result, individuals in pluralism tend to choose values only for resolving conflicts. That is, in their psychological method, pluralists ask the persons to enter into the life of other cultures and to understand and feel empathy for them. So the persons usually grant the values of others as being of equal worth to their own. Finally, there will always be at least two equally worthy values conflicting with one another and the persons in pluralism need to choose between them. Freedom of choice in pluralism is required at this stage for the persons to resolve conflicts between two equally worthy values that are conflicting with one another. Freedom of choice is therefore not for them to create their personal identity but only for resolving conflicts of values.

Put simply, the purposes of freedom of choice in the two theories are different. For liberalism, because the persons in the OP have neutral identity, they reason and choose the value of freedom in order to develop and create their initial neutral identity. For pluralism, in the inside view, the persons already know their collective identity and do not want to create it further. They just want to understand and feel empathy for others' identity. As a result, they grant the identity and the values of others as being of equal worth to their own; and when two values are equally worthy but naturally conflicting, the persons need to refer to their freedom of choice to choose between them in order to resolve the conflict. The two theories therefore have different purposes from one another in requiring and using freedom of choice.

If the above analysis is true, freedom of choice in liberalism seems to be more genuine than that of pluralism, since liberals use their freedom to choose for

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<sup>314</sup> CTH, 10

themselves (i.e. in order to create their identity). It is not a restriction for them to choose; rather, they are willing to do so for themselves. Pluralists however do not use their freedom to choose for themselves, but view it more as a restriction that obliges them to choose in order to resolve conflicts between values that always exist. Although it seems to be paradoxical, it is true that freedom of choice in pluralism is a restriction; that is, it is necessary for the persons in pluralism to choose, rather than them having a will to choose as in liberalism.

Alternatively, we can see freedom of choice in pluralism as *an instrument* to resolve conflicts or to manage values, rather than as a core value as liberalism holds. And if it is merely an instrument to resolve conflicts, freedom of choice in pluralism might not be one of the ultimate values (or one of the choices). Pluralist ultimate values or the values on top of the rank can be, as mentioned, all illiberal values (such as in some situations or contexts), and the persons involved in pluralism must refer to freedom of choice in order to choose or to manage those illiberal values. This is how freedom of choice is used in pluralism; it is used as an instrument, not as a value. In liberalism, on the other hand, freedom must be one of the top ranking ultimate values. It is clearly a core value in liberalism.

Therefore, Gray's claim that freedom of choice in pluralism might make pluralism collapse into liberalism seems to be false, since freedom of choice plays a different role in pluralism to that which it plays in liberalism. The most important reason is that freedom of choice is not conducted in pluralism for self-creation, as Gray claims, but merely as a means of managing conflicts between equally ultimate values. Freedom of choice has a different purpose in pluralism than in liberalism, and therefore does not make pluralism collapse into liberalism.

**To conclude chapter 4**, there are three main differences between pluralism and liberalism. Firstly, their frameworks are different. The liberal framework is similar to the priority monism which has one compatible group of values on top of the ranking. There is no conflict of values since the conflicting values are ranked below the ultimate ones by the universal rationality; to choose one over

the other does not create the sense of loss, but is instead only a trade-off. The pluralist framework, on the other hand, has at least two values of equal worth to one another, on top of the ranking. They are normally conflicting with one another, since there is no appeal to the universal ranking at this stage in pluralism, but this conflict needs to be resolved by choosing one over the other. This always creates a sense of loss, since they are equally worthy as one another.

Secondly, their methods of justifying universal values are different. Liberals refers to the rational method while pluralist refers to the psychological method. These different methods lead them to a number of other differences, such as their different conceptions of the universal values, their different methods to eliminate prejudice, their different possibilities of applying their methods to the real world, and their different perspectives to resolve conflicts in practice.

Finally, Gray claims that pluralism inevitably collapses into liberalism since it requires freedom of choice to choose between the ultimate values. However, after the investigation that has been conducted here, the freedom of choice in liberalism and that in pluralism can be seen to have different purposes from one another.

If the two theories are independent from one another, we can contend that Berlin does not write pluralism in order to present it as another version of traditional liberalism or to make it PUT by combining it with traditional liberalism. Instead, he seems to merely present his idea of pluralism, which might only have some overlapping elements with liberalism (such as negative liberty or freedom of choice).

## **Chapter 5 – Pluralism as a PPT (a particular theory) and as a PMT (a meta-theory)**

If pluralism is independent from both theories of liberalism – i.e. from the counter-enlightenment liberalism and from traditional liberalism – then clearly it does not combine them, and we can in consequence conclude that it should not be considered a PUT (a universal theory) on this basis. We can thus now move to the next step of our argument, which is to weigh up the evidence as to whether pluralism can still be viewed as a PUT despite this independence, or whether it should instead be seen as a PPT (a particular theory) or as a PMT (a meta-theory). As mentioned in the first chapter, pluralism may hold one or more positions amongst these three options.

### **The evidences for pluralism as a PPT and the rejection of its status as a PUT**

Two of these positions – PUT and PPT – are incompatible with one another. Pluralism cannot be both; it can only be one or the other. It seems that Berlin's comments on pluralism lead towards the conclusion that it should be considered a PPT; this therefore immediately implies the rejection of pluralism as PUT. The evidence for pluralism as a PPT rather than as a PUT is as follows.

1) **Incompatibility:** in the previous chapters of this thesis we've seen that pluralism is a distinct theory from the two theories of liberalism. We can also see that the main elements of these three theories (pluralism and the two theories of liberalism) conflict with one another. Their conceptual frameworks can be set out as follows:

*The framework of pluralism* consists of at least two ultimate values, relative to their contexts or cultures, which are of equal worth to one another. They are justified as ultimate by the psychological method of the inside view. They are within the scope of the human horizon of non-violence and the psychological conditions which are the criteria for accepting values in pluralism. And because of the equal status of the ultimate values, they must always be compromised, or

one of them must always be chosen over the other if a conflict between them is to be resolved.

*The framework of traditional liberalism* is based around the value of freedom and other compatible values, which are justified as ultimate in relation to others by the method of rational enquiry, as in the OP. The ultimate liberal values are objective and/or absolute. They cannot be compromised or sacrificed.

*The framework of counter-enlightenment liberalism* derives from a notion of freedom (freedom of the will) which is not justified by any basis at all. In other words, there is no ground for judgment in the counter-enlightenment liberalism. Freedom in this theory, therefore, is not objective or absolute, due to the lack of the ground for judgment. There are no other values which are ranked (by counter-enlightenment liberals) as being of equal worth to freedom. Freedom as the only ultimate value, however, can be sacrificed for other values in some necessary cases, so as to prevent radical revolutions or any violent activities.

From the above, the frameworks of the three theories are obviously incompatible with one another; and if they are incompatible, then they cannot be reconciled into one and the same theory, and cannot be employed at the same time.

This is similar to when two values are incompatible: in such a circumstance they cannot be reconciled, and we cannot have them both at the same time. For example, the values of humility and pride cannot be reconciled and supported simultaneously. Berlin says:

...the Christian and the pagan answers to moral or political questions might both be correct given the premises from which they start; that these premises were not demonstrably false, only incompatible; and that no single overarching standard or criterion was available to decide between, or reconcile, these wholly opposed moralities.<sup>315</sup>

Moreover, regarding the irreconcilability, Berlin says:

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<sup>315</sup> CTH, 32

There are many objective ends, ultimate values, some incompatible with others, pursued by different societies [...] anyone of which may find itself subject to conflicting claims of uncombinable...<sup>316</sup>

It seems that Berlin would believe the same for theories; that is, he would believe that incompatible theories, such as the three theories mentioned above, are irreconcilable, and we cannot subscribe to them at the same time.

2) **Incommensurability**: When the three theories are incompatible and irreconcilable, Berlin tends to believe that they are incommensurable as well. As mentioned earlier, Berlin does not believe in impartial methods of judgment that do not take contexts into account. So he would never refer to impartial rationality as the method of judgment, and nor would he refer to any other types of universal ranking. The indication that he rejects all types of universal ranking is for example:

To assume that all values can be graded on one scale, so that it is a mere matter of inspection to determine the highest, seems to me to falsify our knowledge that men are free agents...<sup>317</sup>

However, the universal ranking is *the only way* to judge and arrive at the one best answer to everything. Without an appeal to the universal ranking, there is no basis to judge pluralism as the one best theory (PUT). Even if Berlin wants pluralism to be a universal theory, he does not have any basis at all (insofar as he has rejected universal ranking) to support this position.

Moreover, Berlin relies on the psychological method of the inside view – the attempt to understand the contexts of others, and to justify answers based on that understanding. It is *not* possible by this method that he could arrive at only one best answer. This is because if we can fully understand other contexts or cultures,

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<sup>316</sup> CTH, 80

<sup>317</sup> FEL, 171

then it follows that we would justify *many* of them, if not all of them; certainly never only one of them.

Berlin says that we can always sympathize with other contexts or cultures. He says:

Members of one culture can understand and enter the minds of, and sympathize with, those of  
another.<sup>318</sup>

So by our understanding and sympathy with others, we tend to justify many of them and never to justify only ours. By this idea of understanding and sympathy with others, Berlin cannot justify pluralism as the one best theory (PUT). He would justify many other theories as well.

Without the universal ranking, and by the method of the inside view, we can say that Berlin always takes contexts into account when he makes judgments of anything. Refer to the descriptions in the first chapter, when Berlin judges values, he takes contexts into account. And he is unable to judge one value as better than another, or being a supreme value, since each value is ultimate within its own contexts. For example, if he takes into account the contexts (in this case the musical categories) in which Mozart and the Beatles are situated, he would be unable to judge either Mozart or the Beatles as better than the other: each one is ultimate in its own category.

It seems that Berlin would judge theories in the same way, that is, by taking contexts into account. The outcome would be the same that he would be unable to judge one theory as better than the other or, as a universal theory (PUT), including even pluralism. That is, if he takes into account the context of traditional liberalism, the context of counter-enlightenment liberalism and also the context of pluralism, he would be unable to judge one theory as better than the others: each is ultimate in its own context.

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<sup>318</sup> CTH, 84



John Gray also agrees on the idea that political theories especially liberalism are contextual dependent. He says:

The task for liberal theory, as I see it, is [...] to retheorize liberalism as itself a particular form of common life.<sup>319</sup>

### **Contexts of theories**

Having said that political theories tend to be ultimate in the different contexts, the following will be examples of contexts that the three theories would flourish. These examples are implied from the theories' conceptual frameworks as well as the consistent demands and/or claims from the theorists of each theory. Although there are many elements that could be considered as contexts for theories, in this thesis we will specify 'contexts' as the perspectives, held by the majority of a population; perspectives that are influenced by the conditions of their societies (such as history and culture) and by the relations between the political and cultural spheres of those societies. Put simply, the contexts of theories are the specific characteristics of the people and the society to which the theory best corresponds.

#### *The context of traditional liberalism*

For *traditional liberalism*, the context might be one in which people value freedom and rationality over cultural differences or cultural identities. This might result from the condition of their society. That is, their society may have a shorter history (such as the new nation like the US). Their cultures tend to have existed for a shorter period compared with those in other societies. Therefore, people in that society tend not to be committed to their cultures so deeply. They do not tend to make demands for the recognition and/or the self-determination of their cultures. In this case, although there are a diversity of cultures or religions in that society, by virtue of the shorter history of their society and cultures, the people within them are not so deeply attached to them, and do not demand recognition

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<sup>319</sup> Gray, EW, 99

for them. They seem to have a rather independent attitude towards their cultures, in that they can quit their membership with them at any time they wish. While they are less attached to their cultures, it follows that their identities are likely to be close to the unencumbered one. From all the above descriptions, we can say that the condition of people and society is quite close to the condition of the parties and society in the OP, in which the parties' identities are unencumbered and the society is non-historical and non-cultural. Therefore, it is likely that the people in liberal context would value freedom and rationality (which is contrary to cultural attachments) over cultural identities, as do the parties in the OP.

When people in society value freedom and rationality over cultural identities, the government of that society tends to create a clear distinction between the political (or public) sphere and the cultural (or personal) sphere. In the political sphere, they will refer entirely to freedom and rationality in order to reach decisions on public policy. They will prevent the cultural sphere (such as cultural or religious beliefs and demands) from interfering with the decisions. In this case, we might be able to say that they give priority to freedom and rationality over cultural beliefs by preventing the latter from interfering with the former. As a result the latter would not have a chance to receive or share any political power with the former at all.

According to Dees, the context of liberalism or the society that best suits liberalism is the one with a clear distinction between political and cultural spheres. He says:

The key elements of liberalism are not individual rights and freedoms or autonomy and self determination, although it supports all of these but the practices that embody the conceptual and social distinctions that become significant after the conflicts of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Those practices encouraged a practical division between wealth and rank, between person and office and between religion and government. What they have in common is that they participate in what Michael Walzer has called the 'art of separation'.

On this view, liberalism is characterized by the political separation of realms of value – so that religious influence cannot be converted into political power [...] the root intuitions are that

success in one realm should not be automatically converted into success in another and that considerations from one realm should have no weight in another.<sup>320</sup>

This division of the political and cultural spheres is consistent with Rawls's PL. As Kymlicka explains:

One way to understand Rawls's Political Liberalism is to say that, for Rawls, people can be communitarians in private life and liberals in public life.<sup>321</sup>

Kymlicka says that by the division of the two spheres in PL, Rawls in fact gives more weight to the value of freedom and rationality (as in the overlapping consensus) over cultural demands. Kymlicka says:

Yet Rawls does not allow traditionalist communitarian groups to establish millet-like systems. His definition of freedom of conscience is the full liberal one, which protects the right of individuals to reject their inherited religion as well as tolerance between religious groups.<sup>322</sup>

So it seems that the division of the two spheres does not help to give equal weight to the cultural differences, as Rawls claims, but on the contrary helps to give more weight to the value of freedom and rationality by preventing the interference of the cultural sphere on the political one. Gray says:

The key move in Rawlsian political liberalism, in other words, is the removal from political life [in this case Gray means cultural/religious beliefs] of the principles specifying the basic liberties and justice in distribution.[...] the object of Rawlsian political liberalism is the removal of these distinguishing marks of the political from both its method and its results. In consequence political life is in Rawlsian political liberalism void of substance.<sup>323</sup>

From the above, it can be considered that in a society where people value freedom and rationality over cultural identities, it tends to follow that the

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<sup>320</sup> Dees, R.H. (1993) 'Liberalism in context', *Polity*, Vol 25, No4, 571

<sup>321</sup> Kymlicka, 2002, 236

<sup>322</sup> Kymlicka, 2002, 234

<sup>323</sup> Gray, EW, 114

political and cultural spheres will be clearly separated, so as to give priority to the value of freedom and rationality in the political sphere without the interference of cultural or religious beliefs and demands. In other words, they clearly separate the two spheres in order to stress the liberal values and reduce (or even get rid of) the power of the cultural values in the political sphere. In this case, there will be no attempt to establish a balance between liberal values and cultural demands, or no compromise of the former towards the latter, but only the former's priority. And, according to Dees, this is the context that best suits liberalism.

An example of the denial to balance or compromise of the political sphere towards the cultural demands can be the rejection of wearing the burqa in France as Grayling mentions:

...it's important to note that what is meant by "banning the burqa" is that any French citizen who accesses public provisions of the French state, such as education or welfare, is required to do so as a French citizen, rather than as a member of one or another self-selected identity group such as constitutes a religion. I don't think France is asking anybody not to wear their religious symbols or their religious dress in their own private time. What it's saying is, if you want to access public provision in some way, don't come disguised, masked, or wearing any major religious symbol, which seems to give the message that you're demanding you be treated differently.<sup>324</sup>

To conclude, the context that best suits liberalism seems to be one in which people (or rather the majority of people) value freedom and rationality over cultural identities. Their identities and society are close to the condition of the OP. And there is a clear distinction between the political and cultural spheres, so as to ensure that the latter cannot receive or share political power with the former.

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<sup>324</sup> Peter B, (2010) 'The Meaning of Life: Interview with Professor A.C. Grayling', *The Free Thinkers*, available at <http://freethinker.co.uk/2010/02/22/the-meaning-of-life-an-interview-with-professor-a-c-grayling/>

For *counter-enlightenment liberalism*, as mentioned in chapters 2 and 3, the ultimate value is free will (or freedom without foundations). One might claim that free will has later been developed into the demands for identity politics or the demands for cultural recognition (which are often demands to be free from universal justification). If this is true, we can say that the ideas of counter-enlightenment liberalism later became developed into communitarian theory. Although the claims of the three thinkers (Herzen, Tolstoy and Turgenev) described in chapter 2 and 3 were based around free will, not cultural identities, other counter-enlightenment thinkers do base their claims on the latter. Vico and Herder, for example, stress the need for a diversity of cultures. Berlin says:

[Herder] maintained that values were not universal, every human society, every people, indeed every age and civilization, possesses its own unique ideals, standards, way of living and thought and action. [...] Every society, every age, has its own cultural horizons. Every nation has its own traditions, its own character, its own face. Every nation has its own centre of moral gravity, which differs from that of every other; there and only there its happiness lies – in the development of its own national needs, its own unique character.<sup>325</sup>

On the basis of this interpretation of Vico and Herder who are, in Berlin's view, significant counter-enlightenment thinkers, we might be able to affirm that counter-enlightenment ideas – especially those focused on cultures – have been developed into communitarian theory.

For the context of communitarianism, it seems to be contrary to that of traditional liberalism. That is, the perspective of people that best suits communitarianism is one in which people value cultural identities over freedom and rationality. This tends to result from the condition of their society. That is, their society tends to have a lengthy history, and their cultures tend to have existed for a long period compared to those in other societies. Therefore, people in that society tend to be committed deeply to their cultures. They tend to make demands for the recognition and/or self-determination of their cultures. In this case, it does not

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<sup>325</sup> CTH, 37

matter if there is a diversity of cultures in society; the lengthy history of their society and cultures still makes people deeply attach to them, and this deep commitment makes it less probable for them to quit their membership of their cultures (unlike people in the above context). Their identities in this case are likely to be the collective one. As a result, it is likely that they would value their cultural identities (including their cultural rationality) over the value of freedom and (impartial) rationality (which is often contrary to cultural beliefs). This condition of people and society is clearly opposed to the condition of the parties and society in the OP (where the parties' identities are unencumbered and the society is non-historical and non-cultural). The result of this condition of people and society therefore turns out to be opposed to that of liberalism. That is, they would value cultural identities over the value of freedom and rationality.

When people in society value cultural identities over freedom and rationality, they tend *not* to have the division between the political and cultural spheres. The demands from the cultural or personal spheres can always be raised in the discussions of the political sphere. The political sphere will refer to freedom and rationality to a lesser extent than cultural rationality or cultural beliefs when reaching decisions on public policy. In other words, cultural rationality or beliefs have more influence on decisions of public policy than freedom and rationality. Most of the time, the state would agree to grant some political power to some cultures according to their cultural demands, such as granting them the recognition of their traditions, or in some cases independent political authority. Kymlicka gives examples of the cultural groups that ask for the recognition of their differences, such as:

...many religious minorities who feel stigmatized and excluded from the national culture, and who seek various forms of recognition of their differences (e.g. public recognition of their religious holidays, exemptions from laws that interfere with religious worship such as animal slaughtering legislation that prohibits the ritually prescribed form of slaughtering for Jews and Muslims, or dress codes which prevent Sikhs from wearing their turbans in the army or police).

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<sup>326</sup> Kymlicka, 2002, 330-331

And the examples of the groups that ask for independent political authority:

...many indigenous peoples, who reject integration in the name of maintaining themselves as distinct nations or people, and who claim a variety of differentiated rights to achieve this goal, including land claims, treaty rights and self government powers.<sup>327</sup>

If the government always grants these cultures the recognition of their differences or in some cases grants them an independent political authority, we might be able to say that the government in that society gives priority to cultural identities over the value of freedom and rationality. That is, they would not refer to liberal values (and practical reasoning) as the universal justification of public policy, and nor would they try to balance or compromise between liberal values and cultural values. But they always take the beliefs and demands of cultures as the main factors for the decisions on the public policy. In other words, they always allow the cultural sphere to be involved with the political sphere (on public policy), or to have influence upon it.

To conclude, from this view of the context that best suits communitarianism, we might be able to say that it is most likely to be found where people seem to value cultural identities over freedom and rationality. Their identities are the collective ones, as opposed to those of the OP, and there is no division between the political and cultural spheres: both influence one another. Canada could be an example of such a context. The Hutterites (large agricultural communities in Canada), based on their religious beliefs, try to restrict the freedom of their members. For example, they say that it is according to their religious doctrine that their members could not leave their group 'without abandoning everything, even the clothes on their backs'. In this case, the Canadian Supreme Court permits them to do so, on the basis of their religious doctrine. It is clear in this case that, in Canada, the cultural sphere can always be involved with and/or receive political recognition from the political sphere. Kymlicka says:

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<sup>327</sup> Kymlicka, 2002, 330

...the majority of justices on the Canadian Supreme Court defended the right of the Hutterites to expel apostates without any compensation...[...] the Supreme Court only reached the opposite conclusion [to Rawls' PL] by subordinating the individual rights of freedom of conscience to the group's right to uphold religious doctrine...

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### *The context of pluralism*

For pluralism, Berlin also claims to have supported demands for group rights and the self-determination of some nations, such as Zionism. As Wollheim explains Berlin:

Zionism is a discrete nationalism, and one which Berlin supported, despite his hostility to the Jewish religion.

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However, Berlin is not a communitarian since he does not support the self-determination of *all* nations. Wollheim says:

[Berlin] made really something of an exception in favor of Zionism [...] he did show himself less sympathetic to other nationalisms with their communitarian bases.

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As mentioned in chapter 3, Berlin is an eclectic who tries to balance liberal and cultural demands (or balance the enlightenment ideas and the counter enlightenment ones). The context that best suits the theory of pluralism seem to be the one in which people do not favor freedom and rationality over cultural identities but give them equal weight. In such a society there tends to be a lengthy history of nation and a lengthy history of cultures. People tend to be committed to their cultures deeply. Their identities are likely to be the collective one. There tends to be some demands for the recognition and/or self-determination from some cultures.

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328 Kymlicka, 2002, 239

329 Wollheim, LIB, 162

330 Wollheim, LIB, 168



However, while people are committed deeply to their cultures, they are also committed to the neutral liberal values such as freedom and rationality. They might have seen the neutral liberal values as one culture among many (e.g. political culture), which they also accept and respect. As a result, they would not value cultural values over liberal values or vice versa, but would rather value them equally, even though these two opposed sides of values often conflict with one another. This condition of people and society is consistent with the condition of Berlin's inside view, which takes into account societal history and cultures, but which at the same time does not rule out the political values (or political culture) that conflict with them. The result of this condition of people and society therefore turns out to accord with Berlin's pluralism, which justifies all ultimate values, cultural and political, as equally worthy as one another.

When people in this type of society give equal weight to politics and cultures, there might be, to some extent, division between the political sphere and the cultural sphere. However, they would allow the spill-over in some cases, as Berlin claims that the clear distinction does not always work well:

A sharp distinction between public and private life, or politics and morality, never works well.  
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And

...the limits of private and public domain are difficult to demarcate, that anything a man does could, in principle, frustrate others; that no man is an island; that the social and the individual aspects of human beings often cannot, in practice, be disentangled.<sup>332</sup>

Since people in this context give both sides (politics and culture) an equal weight, they must try to balance them. Sometimes, they might allow cultures to raise their demands in the political sphere, while at other times they might not allow them to do so. The decision on whether or not they would allow the

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<sup>331</sup> CTH, 32

<sup>332</sup> FEL, 191

involvement of cultures in the political sphere seems to rest on a case by case basis. Berlin mentions the attempt to balance between the two spheres as:

The extent of men's, or a people's, liberty to choose to live as they desire must be weighed  
against the claims of many other values...<sup>333</sup>

We can say that, in this context, the government might agree with the recognition of some cultures, or that they might grant independent authority to them in some necessary cases, since the government tries to balance between the cultural demands and the political values. But there would not be as many agreements (on cultural demands) as in the context of communitarianism, where people value cultural identities over rationality.

The difference between the pluralist context and the communitarian context is therefore that communitarian context gives priority to cultural demands over political values while the pluralist context gives them an equal emphasis (i.e. no priority). Gray states this difference by saying that communitarians give entire weight to the cultural identities, while pluralists stress the diversity of values in society, not only the cultural ones. He says:

We all – all of us, at any rate, who belong to a modern culture, and live in a modern society – have plural allegiances, belong to diverse communities, and know the experience of conflicting roles. [...] Both the left wing and the right wing communitarian versions of the ideal of an integral or organic community flout this fact of the complexity and conflict which is the inheritance of all of us.<sup>334</sup>

Hardy also affirms the attempt to balance between the two opposed sides (political and cultural spheres) by saying that the pluralist context does not agree with the cultural demands all the time, especially if they are against those of human rights. The pluralist context, on the other hand, always refers to freedom and rationality (or political values), balances them equally with the cultural

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<sup>333</sup> FEL, 170

<sup>334</sup> Gray, *Berlin*, 103

demands, and thereby decides whether or not they would justify cultural rights.

As Hardy says:

...it is not sensible, despite the stipulations of political correctness, to regard all bona fide cultures [...] as automatically of equal merits, simply in virtue of their status as cultures...<sup>335</sup>

Berlin says, in some cases, restriction is needed:

We justify them on the ground that ignorance or a barbarian upbringing or cruel pleasures and excitements are worse for us than the amount of restraint needed to repress them.<sup>336</sup>

To conclude, from the above context that best suits pluralism, we might be able to say that it is where people seem to favor freedom and rationality to the same extent with cultural identities. There might be, to some extent, division between the political and cultural spheres. But the division is not clear-cut, as the political sphere sometimes accepts the demands of some cultures to be discussed in the political sphere. They will balance the cultural demands equally with the political values, and they will agree to compromise political values to some extent with the cultural demands; or, in some necessary cases, grant some cultures the recognition of their differences.

The above claims are only examples of contexts that seem to best suit the three theories. The context for traditional liberalism is one in which people, as supported by history and cultures in their society, favor freedom and rationality over cultural identities. The context for the counter-enlightenment liberalism or the communitarian view is one in which people, as supported by history and cultures in their society, favor cultural identities over freedom and rationality. The context for pluralism is one in which people, as supported by history and cultures in their society, favor both sides equally. While each theory is appropriate in each context (especially for the different characteristics of people and society), it is difficult to refer to any universal ranking to compare them and justify one as being the supreme, or normative.

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<sup>335</sup> Hardy, OAM, 286

<sup>336</sup> FEL, 169

It should be noted that Berlin does not make claims as to the contexts of any theories, especially that of pluralism, but these views can be implied, if not only from the frameworks of theories and the claims of theorists, from Berlin's idea of incommensurability or the lack of universal ranking, which tends to apply to theories as well.

3) **Equally worthy**: from the above implication, the three theories are incommensurable in the sense that they are ultimate in the different contexts and, by this implication, Berlin would be unable to justify one as better than the others. He would then justify them (pluralism, counter-enlightenment liberalism and traditional liberalism) as equally worthy as one another, in the same way that he justifies ultimate values held in different contexts. To justify these theories as equally worthy, Berlin can refer to the *three ways* that are used to justify ultimate values as equally worthy in pluralism.

That is, firstly, he can justify them as equally worthy by *their equally ultimate conceptions*. That is, even if Berlin takes into account the conceptions (or the frameworks) of the three theories (without taking into account their contexts) and compares them impartially, as in the OP environment, he might not be able to claim one as better than the other. This is because their conceptions are ultimate in their different aspects; for example, the conception of traditional liberalism is ultimate in terms of rationality, the conception of counter-enlightenment liberalism is ultimate in terms of free will and the conception of pluralism is ultimate in terms of the balance and compromise between conflicting values. If Berlin needs to compare them, therefore he tends to justify all of them as equally worthy to one another, based on their equally ultimate conceptions.

Secondly, he can justify these three theories as equally worthy by *the respect and commitment people have for them*. The ethical or political theories, by the views of some scholars such as Lukes, can be seen to be in the category of cultures or sacred values, and when they are sacred values it means that there are a number of people committed to them (in this case, different groups of people are committed to different theories). By the commitment or respect that people (of

different groups) have for them equally, people sometimes avoid comparing them and instantly grant them as equally worthy to one another. This is in the same way as when they avoid comparing their religions with one another, and agree to grant all as equally worthy.

Considering the commitment or respect that Berlin himself has for the three theories, it seems that he values them equally. There are a number of indications showing his admiration for the counter-enlightenment liberalism and traditional liberalism to the extent that we can see his justification for them as equally worthy to pluralism. For example, he mentions the counter-enlightenment thinker such as Herder (whose idea is consistent to communitarians) in a way that indicates that he entirely agrees with him. Berlin says:

Herder speaks for the counter-enlightenment when he says that ‘each culture has its own centre of gravity’. Herder means by this that different civilizations pursue different goals and they are entitled to pursue them. The fact that we are not Greeks is not against us, the fact that we are not Romans is not a reproach. The idea of trying to make us like the Romans is to distort our proper nature.<sup>337</sup>

His admiration for the counter-enlightenment thinkers can also be referred to the three Russian thinkers mentioned in chapter 2. Consider traditional liberalism, Berlin also shows his admiration for them (although he is not consistent in his claims). Sometimes he even claims himself to be a liberal rationalist. He says:

Fundamentally, I am a liberal rationalist. The values of the enlightenment, what people like Voltaire, Helvetius, Holbach, Condorcet, preached, are deeply sympathetic to me.<sup>338</sup>

By his admiration for the counter-enlightenment liberalism and traditional liberalism, it is likely that he would avoid comparing them with pluralism and would, if he is asked to compare them, justify them as equally worthy to pluralism.

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<sup>337</sup> CWI, 69

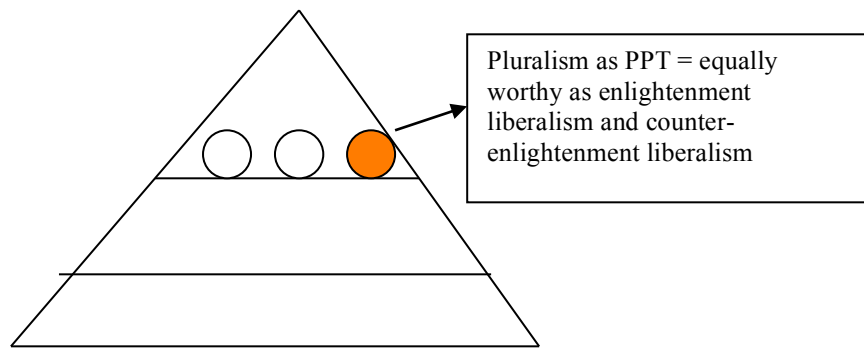
<sup>338</sup> CWI, 70

Thirdly, Berlin can justify the three theories as equally worthy by referring to the mutual understanding between the theorists of the different theories. Mutual understanding can be found, for example, when liberals can understand the pluralist framework and accept its worthiness (such as its worthiness to some contexts) even if they do not personally agree with it, and vice versa. When theorists have this mutual understanding of one another, it is likely that they can agree to justify the theories of others as equally worthy to their own theories. Berlin himself, as he is committed to the inside view, has tried to understand other theories (such as the counter-enlightenment liberalism and traditional liberalism) to the full, and would be able to justify them as equally worthy to pluralism.

4) **Particular theory:** If the three theories are justified as equal to one another, and if we cannot have all of them at the same time (since they are incompatible, as mentioned), it follows that we have to choose each of them according to context. Pluralism, as one of the three, must be chosen according to context as well. For example, pluralism must be chosen in the context as mentioned above, and not in other contexts. There should not be any exception for pluralism, so as to render it a universal theory, when pluralism is equally worthy to the other two.

Although there is no claim from Berlin saying that pluralism is a particular theory, all indications – as already mentioned – lead to the conclusion that it is a particular theory (PPT).

Pluralism as a particular theory can be illustrated as:



From the above explanations, the evidences (in Berlin's pluralism) that prove pluralism to be a particular theory (i.e. its incompatibility, incommensurability and equal worth to the other two theories) are based on the same evidences that prove the ultimate values in pluralism to be particular values (such as being relative to their contexts or cultures). In other words, the evidence that proves the ultimate values in pluralism as particular can be used to prove that the theory of pluralism is particular too.

**To conclude this section,** from a number of indications, it shows that the three theories (pluralism, liberalism and counter-enlightenment liberalism) are incompatible in the sense that their frameworks cannot be reduced into one and the same framework, or it is not possible have all of them at the same time. They are also incommensurable in the sense that there is no universal ranking to justify the best one (at least in Berlin's view); they tend to be ultimate in their different contexts. However, Berlin seems to rank them as equally worthy as one another based on their equally ultimate conceptions, his commitments to them equally and his full understanding of them. By the equal status he gives them and the fact that they cannot be employed at the same time, it is necessary to choose each of them according to context. This leads to the conclusion that pluralism (as well as the other two theories) according to Berlin is particular.

## **The universal human nature: the need for a diversity of cultures**

While the above conclusion that pluralism is PPT is based mainly on the idea that Berlin does not agree with the use of any universal ranking to compare theories, one might ask if there is other way for Berlin to claim pluralism as a universal theory without necessarily referring to any universal ranking or reasoning. Is there another element that might justify that pluralism can be applied to all contexts or cultures? It is possible that universal human nature can be used as a basis to justify pluralism as a universal theory. There are three elements in Berlin's account that can be seen in terms of universal human nature: 1) the central core of non-violence; 2) the psychological ability to empathize others; and 3) the universal need for a diversity of culture. As regards the third, although Berlin does not claim it directly as an aspect of universal human nature, he often stresses the point in his writings. We can assume that, for Berlin, the need for a diversity of culture is part of universal human nature. Crowder says:

A sense of belonging, of feeling at home in your surroundings among people who understand you, is for Berlin a basic good for all human beings.<sup>339</sup>

And

In general, Berlin believes that human cultures are valuable and that cultural diversity is desirable.<sup>340</sup>

Among the three elements, the first two – the demand for non-violence and the feeling of empathy – are not a sufficient basis for justifying pluralism as a universal theory, since these elements by themselves do not specify pluralism. Other theories such as liberalism can also have them. For example, liberalism has the element of human rights, which is quite close to the demand for non-violence and the feeling of empathy. These two elements can be used as criteria to justify

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<sup>339</sup> Crowder, 2004, 183

<sup>340</sup> Crowder, 2004, 182



the acceptable values in pluralism, but they cannot be used to justify pluralism as a universal theory.

Apart from those two elements, the third one – the universal need for a diversity of cultures – might be able to justify pluralism as a universal theory, since it seems to specify pluralism. That is, if all people have the need for belonging at all times, by their differing cultures, they will always demand for a diversity of cultures in their societies. And pluralists can claim that their theory responds best to this demand. So pluralism should be a universal theory by its best response to this universal demand.

However, it should be noted that Berlin acquires the universal human nature merely from historical observation, and that the method of historical observation cannot be used to justify the universal nature of any element in the form of being an absolute or permanent truth. This means changes can occur; and if one day human natures change into something different or even opposite to what Berlin has observed, then pluralists must be able to accept that this new form of human nature no longer fits into the theory of pluralism. Pluralists would then need to justify another theory, instead of pluralism.

In other words, it can be explained that historical observation is the method from which we infer conclusions (in this case the universal need for culture) from past evidence. This is the induction method, which cannot guarantee the absolute or permanent nature of the conclusion. In this case, we cannot affirm that the conclusion will certainly occur in the future. There might be situations in which human beings no longer have the need for a diversity of cultures in their society.

### **Hypothetical situations**

Hypothetically, there can be some examples of situations in which people *no longer have* the need for a diversity of cultures in their society. Firstly, it can be **the Utopian situation**: the situation in which all people in society have good hearts, love one another and have no greed or envy. There are no thieves, and no

criminals; people do not fear one another, as their society is always a safe place to live in. Berlin explains the Utopian situation as follows:

...there was no misery and no greed, no danger or poverty or fear or brutalizing labor or insecurity [...] Broadly speaking, western Utopias tend to contain the same elements: a society lives in a state of pure harmony, in which all its members live in peace, love one another, are free from physical danger, from want of any kind, from insecurity, from degrading work, from envy, from frustration, experience no injustice or violence, love in perpetual, even light, in a temperate climate, in the midst of infinitely fruitful, generous nature.<sup>341</sup>

Moreover, Berlin says that apart from all the perfect conditions mentioned above, they all have the same goals as well. He says:

...human beings as such seek the same essential goals, identical for all, at all time, everywhere...<sup>342</sup>

Berlin raises the examples of the Utopias as he says:

Plato speaks in the Symposium, of the fact that men were once – in a remote and happy past – spherical in shape...[...] Virgil speaks about *Saturnia regna*, the Kingdom of Saturn, in which all things were good. The Hebrew Bible speaks of an earthly paradise, in which Adam and Eve were created by God and led blameless, happy, serene lives – a situation which might have gone on forever...[...] the poet Alfred Tennyson spoke of a kingdom ‘Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, Nor ever wind blows loudly...<sup>343</sup>

Berlin does not believe in the Utopias, neither the ones in the past nor the possibility of having them in the future. He says:

The idea of a single perfect society of all mankind must be internally self contradictory...<sup>344</sup>

And

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<sup>341</sup> CTH, 20

<sup>342</sup> CTH, 20

<sup>343</sup> CTH, 21

<sup>344</sup> CTH, 40

...the very concept of Utopia, is incompatible with the interpretation of the human world as a battle of perpetually new and ceaselessly conflicting wills, individual or collective...<sup>345</sup>

Berlin does not believe in the Utopia, since for him people with different identities and cultural commitments could not cease to conflict (such as in their demands) with one another. However, if we consider the possibility in the future, Utopia might be possible by the development of medicine. For example, in the future, we might be able to build new medical devices that could select the DNA of our children, and as a result all future people will become intelligent, having merely positive characters and good looks. And with this development, people will tend to become similar; to think, act and look like one another. If this happens, identities will cease to be diverse, as they will become reconciled and will become the same. The diversity of cultures (which responded to the diversity of identities) will cease to be diverse as well. They will also be reconciled, and will turn into one culture following the reconciliation of the identities.

In Buddhism, there is also a prediction that in the far future – two thousand years from now – people's identities and cultures will turn into this perfect single whole condition. The Buddhist Utopia seems to be extreme when compared with the Western ones since, for them, people will look exactly similar to one another to the extent that we cannot separate one from the other. They could not even remember one another, since they all look the same; their society at that time will be perfectly harmonious and peaceful. In this case, it is likely that there will be no diversity of cultures but only one. So there seems to be no demands for the diversity of cultures.

Apart from Utopian societies, in the circumstance described by Hume as **the circumstance of scarcity**, in which people are in the condition of dire scarcity and are unsure of their survival, the demand for justice is irrelevant. As Wolff explains:

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<sup>345</sup> CTH, 44

Hume argues that gross scarcity also makes justice inappropriate. This is more controversial, but Hume argues that if there is so little that people's survival is in doubt, no one can be criticized for taking and holding on to whatever they can. We could describe this as the view that there are circumstances where justice begins to become a luxury.<sup>346</sup>

While justice is not applicable in all situations, this might be similar to the demands for preserving cultures and for having a diversity of cultures. They might not be applicable in all situations as well. In Hume's circumstance of scarcity, where justice is a luxury, we might be able to say that in these conditions the demand for preserving cultures and for having a diversity of cultures seems to be a luxury as well. People tend to focus merely on their survival. In other words, they tend to focus on their basic needs (physiological needs) rather than worrying about the preservation of their cultures or the maintenance of their cultural identities; they thus tend to be disinterested in cultures. Therefore, in the circumstance of scarcity, there seems to be no demand for the diversity of cultures as well.

Another hypothetical situation wherein people tend not to have the need for a diversity of cultures can be found in **Tolstoy's society of nature**, where people are *not* committed to academic knowledge and philosophical knowledge (including cultures or religions) at all. They reject the life of the city and all demands for civilization, and go back to what they believe to be their natural origin, which is where they assume all real knowledge can be found. That is, they will begin discovering truth anew there. For example, Berlin explains Tolstoy's idea by way of the following:

...the solution to all our perplexities stares us in the face [i.e. in the nature] – that the answer is about us everywhere, like the light of day, if only we would not close our eyes or looks everywhere but at what is there, staring us in the face, the clear, simple irresistible truth. [...] all his life he defended the proposition – which his own novels and sketches do not embody – that human beings are more harmonious in childhood than under the corrupting influences of education in later life; and also that simple people have a more natural and correct attitude

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<sup>346</sup> Wolff J, 'Models of Distributive Justice' available at [http://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/678/1/J\\_Wolff\\_Justice.pdf](http://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/678/1/J_Wolff_Justice.pdf), 3

towards these basic values than civilized men; and they are free and independent in a sense in which civilized men are not.<sup>347</sup>

In Tolstoy's society of nature, people will let go of all their demands for cultures and religions (which are the sources of philosophical knowledge) as well as all the demands for civilization (which is opposed to the nature). They will return to their pure childhood minds. Berlin says:

The child is closer to the ideal harmony than the grown man and the simple peasant than the torn, 'alienated', morally and spiritually unanchored and self destructive parasites who form the civilized elite.<sup>348</sup>

If Tolstoy's society of nature becomes real – for example, if in the future people want to be independent from their knowledge and cultural beliefs, or get bored with civilized life and decide to leave it in favor of a supposedly 'pure' nature – then there will no longer be the need for cultures (which are part of their existing knowledge and beliefs) unless we count 'living with nature' itself as one culture. And if living with nature is one culture, there will be only one culture in that circumstance, not a diversity of them.

Tolstoy's society of nature can be considered as a type of anarchist Utopia where people let go of all their commitments, their civilized society and return to live with nature. There are no institutions, no government and no control, and there are no conflicts between human beings or between human beings and institutions; only harmonious life. As Berlin says:

[in nature] Truth is discoverable: to follow it is to be good, inwardly sound, harmonious.<sup>349</sup>

This might be consistent with Zeno's anarchist Utopia as Berlin describes:

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<sup>347</sup> RT, 283

<sup>348</sup> RT, 287

<sup>349</sup> RT, 285

Zeno the Stoic conceives an anarchist society in which all rational beings live in perfect peace, equality and happiness without the benefit of institutions. If men are rational, they do not need control; rational beings have no need of the state, or of money, or of law courts, or of any organized, institutional life. In the perfect society men and women shall wear identical clothes and 'feed in a common pasture'. Provided that they are rational, all their wishes will necessarily be rational too, and so capable of total harmonious realization.<sup>350</sup>

Tolstoy's society seems to be similar to Zeno's anarchist Utopia in that there are no institutions and/or authoritarian control. The difference is only that Tolstoy refers to nature (or the pure childhood mind) as the element for perfection, while Zeno refers to rationality as the element for perfection. In both cases, there seems to be no need for a diversity of cultures.

Although these three hypothetical situations – the situation of the Utopia, the circumstance of scarcity and Tolstoy's society of nature – are relatively extreme, they can give us the idea that human nature could unexpectedly change into something entirely different from what we have seen. If human nature could actually change from what Berlin has observed, then people in some places or times no longer have the need for a diversity of cultures (i.e. if one of the hypothetical situations becomes real), and pluralism, which claims to be the best theory on the basis of a universal human need for a diversity of cultures, would no longer be applicable.

Pluralism could not then be a universal theory, but only a contextual dependent theory. It can be the best theory only when people have the need for a diversity of cultures, and not in other different contexts of nature. Put simply, Berlin's claim as to the need for a diversity of cultures as a universal aspect of human nature cannot be the basis for pluralism as a universal theory, because human nature could change and become different from Berlin's observations.

It should be noted that if Berlin does not refer to historical observation as the basis of justifications for the need for a diversity of cultures; if he refers to other method to justify it (such as the rational method, like liberals), or if he claims it

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<sup>350</sup> CTH, 22

to be a metaphysical truth (as communitarians claim for the collective identity) which could make the need for a diversity of cultures an absolute or permanent truth, then pluralists might refer to the need for a diversity of cultures as a basis for justifying pluralism as a universal theory. However, Berlin does not refer to either rational method or metaphysical truth but only to historical observation. The need for a diversity of cultures which is based merely on historical observation cannot be the basis for justifying pluralism as a universal theory, since there is some possibility for changes in the future.

### **The evidences for PMT**

In the sections above, we concluded that pluralism is a particular theory (PPT) and that the need for a diversity of cultures cannot be the ground for pluralism as the universal theory (PUT). We might now consider the evidence that pluralism can be seen as a meta-theory (PMT). The first evidence is the theories that he justifies.

#### *The theories that Berlin justifies*

Referring back to the evidences for pluralism as PPT: because Berlin tends to believe that the three theories (pluralism and the two theories of liberalism) are equally worthy to one another, it is also possible that he might justify some other theories as being of equal worth to these theories as well. For example, there are some indications that Berlin might justify **multiculturalism and communitarianism** as equal to pluralism.

Communitarianism, as mentioned earlier, can be seen to have developed from counter-enlightenment liberalism. Berlin seems to admire and justify it as equally worthy to pluralism, although he is well aware that it consists of a different (and conflicting) framework with pluralism. For example, Gray claims that Berlin agrees in some part with communitarianism:

Berlin is at one with the communitarian critics of liberalism in affirming that there is an ineliminable public or communal dimension of individual well being for all, or almost all, human beings.<sup>351</sup>

And it is quite certain that Berlin agrees with the idea of the collective self claimed by communitarianism. As Gray says:

[according to communitarian], we are not free floating Kantian subjects, for which every relationship is revocable and no form of common life definitive, we find ourselves embedded in relationships and attachments which enter into and shape our very identities. With all of this, Berlin concurs.<sup>352</sup>

For multiculturalism, it is the theory that has the framework as close to communitarianism but is claimed to attach more to the liberal values such as freedom and equality. Berlin seems to be also sympathetic with this theory. It is more likely that he would justify it as equally worthy to pluralism. Some scholars even believe that Berlin's pluralism implies multiculturalism. As Crowder says:

Williams Galston has argued that value pluralism implies a generous form of multiculturalism that is best facilitated by an accommodating tolerant form of liberalism.<sup>353</sup>

Although this claim is not true since multiculturalism is the developed theory from liberalism while pluralism, as we know, has the framework which is incompatible with liberalism, the opinion of these scholars shows that Berlin agrees to some extent with multiculturalism in the same way as he does with liberalism.

#### *The theories that Berlin rejects*

While Berlin seems to justify many theories as of equal worth to pluralism, he does not justify every theory. For example, he claims not to justify **relativism**,

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<sup>351</sup> Gray, *Berlin*, 102

<sup>352</sup> Gray, *Berlin*, 102

<sup>353</sup> Crowder, OAM, 25



**utilitarianism and totalitarianism.** For relativism, Berlin explicitly disagrees with it on the basis that it does not require any cross-cultural judgment or even cross-cultural understanding. He says:

Relativism is something different [from pluralism], I take it to mean a doctrine according to which the judgment of a man or a group, since it is the expression or statement of a taste, or emotional attitude or outlook, is simply what it is, with *no objective correlate* which determines its truth or falsehood. [...] The most extreme versions of cultural relativism, which stress the vast differences of cultures hold that one culture can *scarcely begin to understand* what other civilizations lived by [which is different from pluralism].<sup>354</sup>

For totalitarianism, Berlin would certainly reject it since he rejects every idea that rules out all possibility for freedom. He says:

...I have to say that no better excuse, or even reason, has ever been propounded for unlimited despotism or the part of an elite which robs the majority of its essential liberties.<sup>355</sup>

From the theories that he justifies and those that he rejects, it shows that Berlin accepts only the theories that have some resistance to violence which is parallel with the conception of the human horizon. We might be able to say that Berlin refers to **the objective human horizon** to select or to justify these theories.

To explain further, the theories that he justifies, such as the two theories of liberalism, multiculturalism and communitarianism, are all within the human horizon of non-violence and psychological conditions of understanding and empathy. Communitarianism might in some cases agree to compromise or sacrifice some human rights; they might, for example, agree on some extent of limitation of individual freedom based on some religious discipline. The Hutterite in Canada as mentioned earlier is an example.<sup>356</sup> However, communitarians would not accept extreme cultural beliefs or activities that are beyond our ability to understand or sympathise, or those that create and/or lead to

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<sup>354</sup> CTH, 81

<sup>355</sup> POI, 14

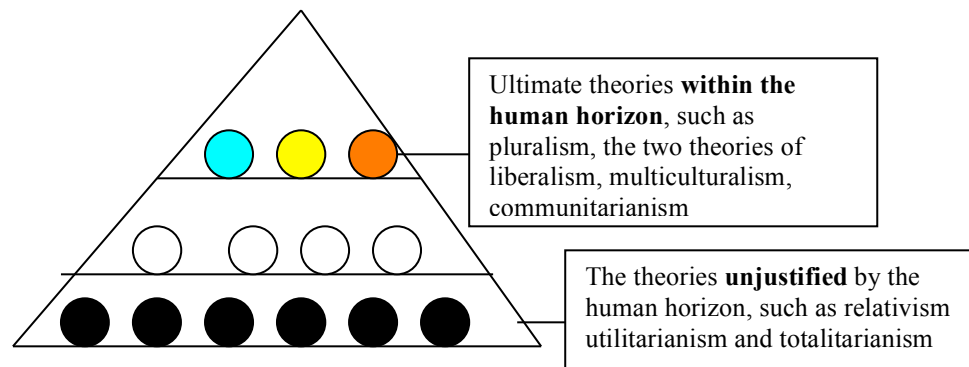
<sup>356</sup> Kymlicka, 2002, 236

violence. We might then be able to say that communitarian framework is still within the scope of the human horizon, which is why Berlin justifies it.

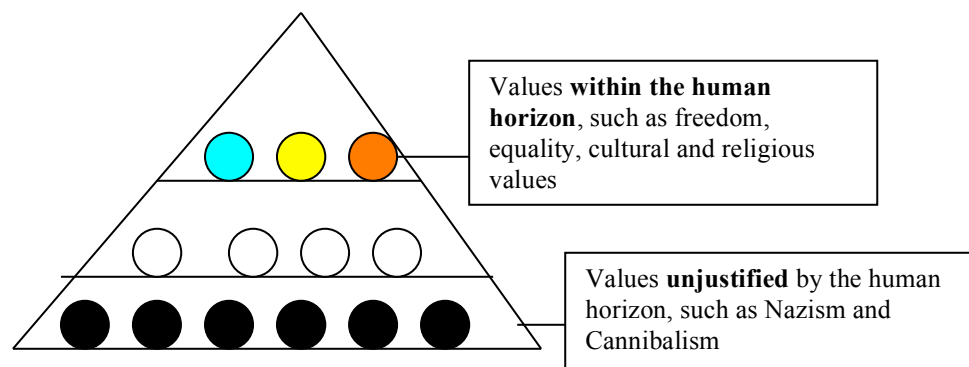
On the other hand, the framework of relativism is not within the human horizon, in that it does not have any justification of values. In this case, it might allow violent activities which are beyond our ability to understand and empathize with. Utilitarianism and totalitarianism, by their principles can also lead to violent activities. For example, utilitarianism might allow killing a few people in order to save many others. Totalitarianism certainly agrees with violent activities, such as the Nazi racism. While Berlin does not accept these theories, and whilst all of them could lead to violence, it can be implied that Berlin refers to the human horizon to justify theories in the same way as he does with values.

As indicated in the first chapter of this thesis, it seems that Berlin, as based on his observations, considers the human horizon of non-violence and psychological conditions of understanding and empathy to be **universal**. That is, he tends to believe that it is what all human beings share, and he uses it as the universal criteria to justify values in pluralism. If it is actually universal in Berlin's view, then it is likely that he would refer to it to justify theories as well.

As we saw in the previous sections, Berlin seems to believe that the political theories are particular (or relative to their contexts; this includes pluralism). They are incompatible and incommensurable with one another, and at the same time they are of equal worth to one another. In this case, when he refers to the human horizon to justify them, the structure of his views on theories can be illustrated as follows:



The picture above is similar to Berlin's structure of values which appears, as shown in chapter one, in the following picture:



This means **his attitude or judgment of political theories is according to the pluralist framework**, which accepts a plurality of theories as being of equal worth to one another (including pluralism) so long as all are within the human horizon (which is the universal criterion of judgment in the pluralist framework). The pluralist framework in this case **acts as a meta-theory (PMT)**, or as the framework that Berlin uses to manage all equally worthy political/ethical theories. It should be noted that the term 'meta-theory' in this case does not have

any formal meaning which involves the implication of institutions; it only means the ‘attitude’ or ‘perspective’ that Berlin uses to manage or justify political and ethical theories.

When Berlin uses this framework both to manage values and theories, it is likely that he sees this framework as ‘**universal**’. It is certainly not universal in the sense of being an absolute or permanent truth, but universal in the sense of being the framework which should be used to manage all levels of political/ethical properties. This also indicates that pluralism as PMT has a monist form, which claims the pluralist framework to be the one most able to manage all political/ethical properties.

As noted in the previous chapter, Gray claims that Berlin’s pluralism is universal. He might not believe it to be universal in terms of being a PUT, since he should be well aware of the nature of pluralism that it does not attach to any universal ranking. Consequently, his contention should really be that pluralism is a PMT. In other words, he should agree with the claims set out above.

**To conclude this chapter:** from the evidence presented above, pluralism can be seen as a PPT (or a particular theory) on the grounds that the three theories – pluralism, traditional liberalism and counter-enlightenment liberalism – have conceptual frameworks that are incompatible with one another. They are incompatible to such an extent that they cannot be reduced into one and the same theory; nor can we have all of them at the same time. They are incommensurable, as they are ultimate in their own differing contexts. Traditional liberalism is ultimate in a context where people value freedom and rationality over cultural identities. In such a context the identities and society of the people concerned would be close to the condition of the OP. In this context there is also a clear distinction between the political and cultural spheres, so as to ensure that the latter cannot receive or share political power with the former. Counter-enlightenment liberalism or communitarianism, however, is ultimate in a context in which people value cultural identities over freedom and rationality. Their identities are the collective identity; this differs from the conditions of the OP. In addition, there is no division between the political and cultural spheres, which

means that the cultural sphere can always receive or share political power with the political sphere. Thirdly, pluralism, as the eclectic theory that stands between the two opposed theories, is ultimate in a context in which people value freedom and rationality to the same extent as they value cultural identities. There might be some division between the political and cultural spheres, but the division is not clear-cut. In this pluralist context the political sphere sometimes accepts the demands of certain cultures to have their requests and requirements discussed within the political sphere, which then tries to balance these cultural demands with political values.

It is assumed to be Berlin's view that the three theories are ultimate in their own different contexts. There can be no universal reasoning able to justify one of them as a universal theory. At the same time, Berlin seems to rank them as being of equal worth to one another, on the basis of their equally ultimate frameworks, and according to his equal commitments to them or according to his understanding and empathy for all of them. As a result, by their equal status, it is necessary to choose each theory according to context. This leads to the conclusion that pluralism (as well as the other two theories), according to Berlin, is a particular theory (a PPT).

One might argue that pluralism can be a universal theory by not referring to universal reasoning or to ranking, but rather to other factors, such as conceptions of universal human nature. As Berlin seems to justify the need for a diversity of cultures as a universal human nature, we might consider it as grounds for pluralism to be a universal theory (a PUT). That is, because all people have the need for culture, by their differing cultures, they therefore always demand a diversity of cultures in their society. Pluralism is the political theory that best responds to this demand, and it could therefore be cast as a universal theory on this basis.

However, Berlin's claim as to the universality of human nature (the universal need for a diversity of culture) is based merely on historical observation; and if it is based on observation, it cannot be an absolute or permanent truth, but only a contingent truth. There is a possibility that changes might occur in the future: for

example, human natures and societies may change into some kind of extreme circumstance, such as those that can be found in portrayals of Utopia, within which the eradication of scarcity or a return to nature may prompt the issues discussed above. Human beings will no longer have the need for a diversity of cultures and as a result pluralism could no longer be presented as the response to requirements of a universal human nature. Therefore, assuming the latter's continual need for a diversity of cultures on the basis of historical observation (which entails the possibility for change) cannot provide a basis for pluralism as a universal theory or (as a PUT).

When pluralism is a particular theory one can also find evidence that it could be viewed as a meta-theory (or PMT) as well. That is, from a consideration of the theories that Berlin justifies (e.g. the two theories of liberalism, communitarianism, multiculturalism) and of those that he does not (i.e. relativism, utilitarianism and totalitarianism), it can be shown that he refers to the human horizon as a criterion for justifying them. This means that his attitude towards judging theories can be seen to accord with the pluralist framework, which accepts a plurality of theories (including pluralism) as being of equal value, provided they fall within the human horizon. The pluralist framework in this case acts as a meta-theory (or PMT).

## Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this thesis for the titles of books *by* Berlin:

CTH	The Crooked Timber of Humanity (2003)
FEL	Four Essays On Liberty (1969)
POI	The Power of Ideas (2000)
ROR	The Roots of Romanticism (2000)
RT	Russian Thinkers (2008)

The following abbreviations are used in this thesis for the titles of books *about* Berlin:

Berlin	Berlin (1995)
CWI	Conversation with Isaiah Berlin (1991)
EW	Enlightenment's Wake (1995)
LIB	The Legacy of Isaiah Berlin (2001)
OAM	The One and The Many (2007)

The following abbreviations are used in this thesis for the titles of books *by Ruth Chang*:

MCC	Making Comparisons Count (2002)
IIPR	Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical Reason (1997)

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